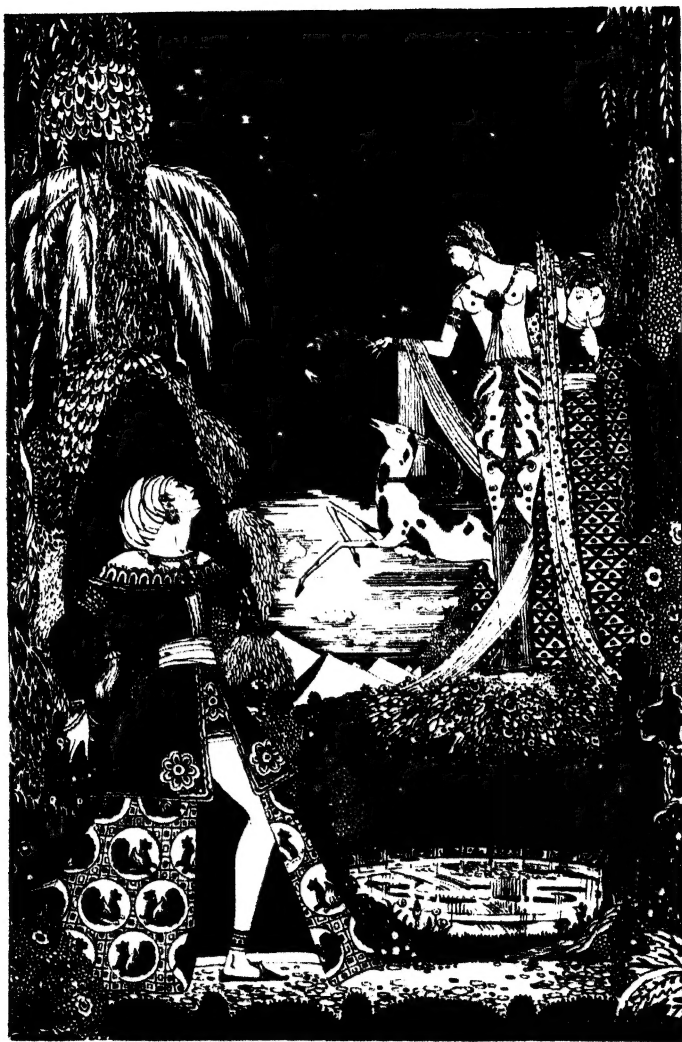


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The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT



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*"Diadem hid himself behind a cluster of
flowers"*

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and **ONE NIGHT**

Rendered from the literal and complete
version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus;
and collated with other
sources; by

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from drawings by
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CONTENTS

THE TALE OF KING OMAR AL-NEMAN AND HIS TWO REMARKABLE SONS, SHARKAN AND AL-MAKAN	1
<i>containing</i>	
<i>The Sayings of the Three Doors</i>	78
<i>The Tale of the Death of King Omar Al-Neman and the Admirable Discourses which went before it</i>	119
<i>Which itself includes</i>	
<i>The Discourse of the First Girl</i>	120
<i>The Discourse of the Second Girl</i>	122
<i>The Discourse of the Third Girl</i>	124
<i>The Discourse of the Fourth Girl</i>	125
<i>The Discourse of the Fifth Girl</i>	127
<i>The Discourse of the Old Woman</i>	130
<i>The Tale of the Monastery</i>	160
<i>The Tale of Aziz and Aziza and of Prince Diadem</i>	191
THE END OF THE TALE OF KING OMAR AL-NEMAN	209

Contents

containing

<i>The Tale of Aziz and Aziza</i>	209
<i>The Tale of Princess Donia and Prince Diadem..</i>	258
<i>The Adventures of Young Kanmakan, Son of Al-Makan</i>	303
<i>The Tale of the Hashish Eater</i>	321
<i>The Tale of Hamad, the Bedouin</i>	335
 <i>THE DELIGHTFUL TALE OF THE BEASTS AND BIRDS</i>	 346

containing

<i>The Tale of the Goose, the Peacock, and the Peahen</i>	346
<i>The Tale of the Shepherd and the Girl</i>	360
<i>The Tale of the Tortoise and the Heron</i>	363
<i>The Tale of the Wolf and the Fox</i>	366
<i>The Tale of the Mouse and the Weasel</i>	375
<i>The Tale of the Crow and the Civet</i>	377
<i>The Tale of the Crow and the Fox</i>	378
 <i>THE TALE OF ALI BIN BAKKAR AND THE FAIR SHAMS AL-NAHAR</i>	 386

THE TALE OF KING OMAR AL-NEMAN
AND HIS TWO REMARKABLE SONS,
SHARKAN AND AL-MAKAN

THEN SHAHRAZADE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once in the city of Baghdad, after the reign of many khalifats and before the reign of many others, a king called Omar Al-Neman. He was formidable in war, had conquered all the chosroës, and brought the cæsars under his dominion. None might warm themselves at his fire; none might stand against him in feats of arms; and sparks of fire jetted from his nostrils when he was angry. He had conquered all the lands there are; the cities of the world were subject to him. With God's help, he had subdued all the human race and sent victorious armies into the ends of the earth. The East and the West acknowledged him as king; with Hind, Sind, and China; Yemen, Al-Hijaz, and Abyssinia; Soudan, Syria, and Greece; the provinces of Diyar Bakr, together with all the isles of the sea and the territories watered by Sayhun and Jayhun, the Nile and the Euphrates. He had sent messengers into

the confines of the world to find out the true news of his empire and they had returned to tell him that the rulers of the world acknowledged his supremacy. He had spread the garment of his generosity over all his tributaries, had drowned them in the waters of his benevolence and, out of the greatness of his soul, had spread safety and sweet concord among them all.

All manner of gifts and the unending tributes of the earth flowed continually towards his throne, because he was loved as well as feared.

Omar Al-Neman had one son who was called Sharkan, that is to say An Evil Has Arisen, because he showed himself the prodigy of that time, surpassed in boldness the greatest heroes of tourney, and wielded the lance, the sword, and the bow with a skill that was more than human. His father loved him with an abiding love and had named him as the successor to his throne: for at the age of twenty, by Allah's help, Sharkan had bowed the heads of all before the illumination of his brave renown. He had already taken strongholds by assault, reduced whole countries, and spread his fame among the peoples. As the months went by he grew in pride and power.

The king had no other child but Sharkan, though he possessed, as the Book allowed him, four wives. Besides these four, three of whom had remained barren, he had three hundred and sixty concubines, each of a different race, as many as there are days in the Coptic year. For each of these he had built a separate apartment in the body of the palace; and these apartments were divided into twelve groups, one group for each month and each group containing thirty concubines. To every concubine he allotted one night of the year on which he slept with her; and then for a whole twelve

months he did not see her again. This was a rule to which he adhered during all his lifetime, so that he became renowned as much for his admirable wisdom as for the strength of his manhood.

One day, He who divinely orders all things allowed one of King Omar's concubines to conceive. When the news became known in the palace and reached the king, he rejoiced exceedingly, crying: "God grant that all my posterity be males!" He had the date of the conception inscribed upon a register and heaped both presents and attentions upon the woman.

Sharkan, the king's son

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHARKAN, THE KING'S SON, also heard of the conception and became very sorrowful for fear that there might be a newcomer to dispute his succession to the throne. This preyed on his mind so much that he resolved to kill the child if it should be a male.

The concubine was a young Greek slave called Saffia, who had been sent by the Greeks of Cesarea with other rich presents. She was by far the most beautiful of all the palace slaves; her face and form were fairer, her thighs and shoulders stronger than those of any of them; and she had, moreover, an excellent intelligence. She had known how to speak sweet words to the king when he lay with her, words that stayed in his mind and disposed him towards her. When her

pains had come, she sat on the child stool and prayed to Allah, who heard her prayer.

Both King Omar and Sharkan had posted a eunuch to tell him immediately the sex of the child; so, as soon as Saffia bore a child and the midwives announced that it was a girl whose face shone like a slip of the moon, each eunuch ran and informed his master; and Sharkan at least rejoiced. No sooner had the eunuchs departed than Saffia said to the midwives: "Wait, O wait! There is something yet inside me." Again she uttered the "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" of labour, and brought forth a second child. The midwives eagerly bent over it and lo! it shone like the full moon; a boy, with a brow of brilliant white and cheeks which were flowering roses. The slaves, the servants, and the guests rejoiced, filling the palace with the shrillest joy, so that the other concubines heard and understood and withered where they were from envy.

Omar Al-Neman joyfully thanked Allah when he heard the news and ran to the apartment of Saffia. Taking her head in his hands he kissed her and then bent over the new-born child; while he kissed his son the slaves beat musically upon drums, the lute players and singers discoursed fitting melodies.

Then the king named his son Zau Al-Makan and his daughter Nuzhat Al-Zaman; that is to say, Light of the Place and Delight of the Age. Those who were present bowed to signify that the names were fitting; and the king chose nurses, slaves, and servants for his two offspring, giving to every person in the palace an abundance of wines and perfumes, with other pleasant matters of celebration too numerous to mention.

The people of Baghdad were highly delighted when they heard of the double birth; they decorated and illuminated the city; and sent the emirs, wazirs, and

chief notables to present humble congratulations to the king. Omar thanked them and bestowed riches and robes of honour on high and low alike. For four years he did not let a day pass without sending for news of Saffia and his children; and from time to time bestowed upon the mother prodigious gifts of jewellery and goldsmith's work, robes and silks, gold and silver, and dear-bought marvels of all kinds. The education and safeguarding of the children he confided to the wisest and most trusted of his people.

Sharkan, who was far from the city fighting and raiding, taking cities and adding to the glory of his wars, knew nothing of the birth of his brother, Al-Makan.

One day as Omar Al-Neman sat upon his throne, certain of the chamberlains entered and kissed the earth between his hands, saying: "O king, envoys wait without from Aphridonios, sultan of Rome and Constantinople. If it be your wish, we will bring them in; or if it be your wish, we will send them away."

Omar had the envoys brought before him and greeted them kindly, asking after their health and the reason of their coming. One of them kissed the earth between his hands and said:

GREAT AND VENERABLE KING, we are sent by King Aphridonios, master of Greece and Ionia, commander of the armies of all Christian peoples, whose throne is in Constantinople. He has commanded us to tell you that he is about to undertake a most bloody war against the fierce tyrant Hardobios, king of Cesarea.

The cause of it is this: some time ago an Arab chief found, in some newly-conquered territory, a treasure of the time of Alexander the Great; a hoard of incalculable richness, containing, among a thousand other

things, three round jewels as big as ostrich-eggs; white and flawless, surpassing in beauty and value all other gems of land and sea. Each is pierced for a neck-cord and has mysterious inscriptions engraved upon it in Ionian characters. One of the least of the virtues of these stones is that all who wear them, and especially new-born children, are protected from all diseases and especially from fevers and constipation.

The Arab chief learnt something of the strange powers of these jewels and thought that an occasion had arisen for obtaining the good graces of our king; so he prepared two ships, loading one with the three gems and a great part of the rest of the treasure as a gift for King Aphridonios and the other with guards to protect the valuables; though he did not think that any would dare directly to lay hands on goods intended for the powerful Aphridonios, especially as the way of the ships lay over the sea on which Constantinople stands.

Nevertheless, soon after the ships had sailed, when they were putting into a bay not far from our country, a band of Greek soldiers belonging to King Hardobios of Cesarea, our vassal, attacked them; bore off all the treasure including the three magic jewels, put both the crews to the sword, and carried away the ships.

When our king heard of this, he sent an army against Hardobios, who destroyed it; then a second, which was put to flight in its turn; now our master has sworn a great and angry oath that he will put himself at the head of his massed armies and not turn back until he has destroyed Cesarea, laid waste all the kingdom of Hardobios, and razed those towns to the earth which are tributary to him.

Glorious sultan, we come to claim your assistance and solicit the power and glory of an alliance with

you. You cannot fail to add to the lustre of your fame by helping us; and our king has sent great gifts of every kind as a sign of the reliance which he places in your generosity. He begs you to accept them and to look favourably upon his request.

The envoys fell silent and bowed to the ground, kissing the earth between the king's hands.

Now these are the presents which Aphridonios, lord of Constantinople

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NOW THESE ARE the presents which Aphridonios, lord of Constantinople, sent to Omar Al-Neman: fifty of the fairest virgins in all Greece; fifty of the most glorious boys from Rome, dressed in gold-embroidered silken full-sleeved robes, with coloured pictures in needlework upon them, and silver damascened gold belts holding up double skirts of brocaded velvet which fell in unequal lengths, gold rings in their ears from which depended single round white pearls each worth a thousand pound weight in gold. The girls, too, were sumptuously decked.

These were the two principal presents, but the rest did not fall short of them in value; so King Omar accepted them with pleasure and ordered the envoys to be honourably entertained. Then he assembled his wazirs that they might advise him as to what answer he should return to King Aphridonios. The grand

wazir, Dandan, a venerable old man who was respected and loved by all, rose in his place and said:

Sultan of glory, it is true that King Aphridonios of Constantinople is a Christian, infidel to the law of Allah and his Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace), and that his people are unbelievers; it is also true that the man against whom he asks our help is equally an unbeliever; therefore their affairs concern them only and do not touch the policy of Believers. Yet I advise you to ally yourself with King Aphridonios and to send him a great army with your son, Sharkan, at its head. I counsel this for two reasons: first, that the king has sent you presents which you have accepted; second, that, in helping him against the little king of Cesarea, whose resistance to you will be negligible, you will achieve another victory whose fame, spreading about the west, will cause the kings of the west to seek your friendship with numerous presents and extraordinary gifts.

Omar Al-Neman approved this speech and gave Dandan a robe of honour, saying: "Truly you are an inspired counsellor of kings; I shall place you at the head of the army and Sharkan, my son, can command the rearguard."

The king sent for his son, who had just returned from his glorious expedition, and, telling him of Dandan's advice, bade him make ready for war, distributing largesse among the soldiers and choosing from them all ten thousand well-equipped cavaliers, accustomed to privation and fatigue. After listening respectfully to his father's words, Sharkan gave presents of gold and selected his troop, allowing to each man three days for repose and refreshment. The ten thousand kissed the earth between his hands and went

out to spend the money which they had received on equipment for the expedition.

Sharkan himself chose, from the treasuries and armouries of the palace, weapons inlaid with gold, having lucky inscriptions on ivory and ebony, until he was accoutred from head to foot. Then he went to the stables and inspected the stud of noble horses, each of which had his pedigree fastened about his neck in a leather amulet worked with silk and embossed with turquoises. He selected a bay horse with shining coat and wide-starting eyes, large-hoofed and proudly-tailed, with ears as sensitive as those of a gazelle. This animal had been given to Omar Al-Neman by the sheikh of a powerful tribe and was such a horse as has been seldom seen upon the earth.

After the three days of preparation the army assembled outside the city; and Omar Al-Neman went out to say farewell to his son and his grand wazir. He gave seven chests of treasure to Sharkan and advised him to be guided by the wise Dandan. Sharkan promised; and the king recommended him and all the army to Dandan, who kissed the earth between his hands and accepted the charge. Then Sharkan mounted his horse and reviewed his troops in front of the king and the wazir. Finally the two generals galloped off at the head of the army with a throbbing of war-drums, a shrilling of fifes, and a blaring of clarions; and the standards and banners lying out in the wind above their heads. They went forward for twenty days under the guidance of the envoys and came at length, on the twenty-first night, to a large well-wooded and well-watered valley, where Sharkan ordered the tents to be pitched and proclaimed a rest of three days. The cavaliers made their camp and disappeared among the woods; the wazir, Dandan, rested in his tent in the

middle of the valley with the envoys of King Aphrionios camped about him.

Sharkan dismissed his guards and ordered them to attend the wazir; then he gave rein to his charger and set out to explore the valley, since they were now near enemy country and his father had advised him to see all for himself. He explored the whole neighbourhood until a quarter of the night had passed; then sleep weighed upon his eyes and, as he was accustomed to sleep on horseback, he left the courser to find its own way and fell into a deep slumber.

He was awakened at midnight by his horse pawing the ground violently and halting in the middle of a wooded solitude, brightly lighted by the moon. Sharkan was startled to find himself in so lonely a place; but he said aloud the word which never fails: "There is no power or might save in Allah!" and felt no further fear of the savage creatures of the wood. The moon poured magic silver down into the glade, as if it had been one of the glades of Paradise, and Sharkan heard near at hand sweet words in a perfect voice and laughter that might have been the moonlight itself. Any man would have been lost in a delicate lechery to drink that laughter from the mouth which made it, and to die.

Sharkan leapt from his horse and proceeded through the trees towards the voices until he came to a white river of happy water running and singing; its songs were answered by the chanting of birds, the plaining of gazelles, and a unison of all the beasts of the field; so that it was not many songs but one song, deep and delicious. The bank was embroidered and jewelled with flowers and grasses. A poet has said:

*How sad-coloured the earth would seem,
How grey each water stream,*

If flowers were dead.

God said:

Let there be flowers,

Let streams be filled with showers;

And then decreed my lazy hours

Should pass in water-meadows filled with flowers.

Sharkan saw, rising in the moonlight on the other bank of the stream, a monastery built of white stone and dominated by a tall tower. This building refreshed its feet in the living waters of the river; and beside it stretched a green sward, upon which ten young women were seated about one. The ten were virgin and marvellous, carved from moonlight, lightly robed in soft and flowing draperies. A poet has thus spoken of them:

The moon shines and the grasses shine

With candid girls and argentine,

The grasses sigh and shine.

Those slimly dancing bodies wave

With the same sway that green reeds have,

Or as the grasses wave.

Ah, vine-borne clusters of new grapes,

So the hair falls down on their napes,

Like yellow grapes and purple grapes.

As long brown arrows dipped in gold

Their eye-glances; the shots are told

And my heart is the gold.

The woman, about whom these ten sat, might have been supposed the moon herself had not that round been shining down upon the lawn. Her brows were black bows lying in the dawn-light of her forehead,

long lashes of curved silk fringed her eyelids and the little clusters of her hair curled sweetly about her temples. She was such an one as the poet had in his mind when he sang:

*With black glances
And haughty poses
Of her white slimness
(Bow down, lances
Famed for straightness).
She proposes
Now to flout me
For my lateness
And advances—
Starlit-dimness
Of wet roses
Grows about me.*

*When as now
Her tumbled hair
Falls adorning
A clear brow,
(Who has seen the phœnix nesting
On an aromatic bosom
Woven of the sweet and rare
Branches of his fabled gum-tree?)
Lo, the night's black wing is resting
On the blossom
Of the plum-tree
Of the morning.*

It was her voice which Sharkan had heard; and now she was laughing and speaking in Arabic to the young slaves who were with her: "By the Messiah, little shameless ones, that is not a pretty thing that you are doing! If one of you starts again I will tie her up

with her belt and slap her bottom. Come, my dears, let us see if one of you can beat me at wrestling; step forward before the moon sets."

One of the young girls came forward and was soon thrown to the ground. Then a second and a third. Before long all ten were trussed up and punished as the young woman had promised. Suddenly an old woman came out of the forest and approached the band of young wrestlers, saying to the victorious one: "What are you doing with these young girls, O perverse maiden? Do you think that there is any glory in conquering weak children such as these? If you want to wrestle, try a turn with me. I am old but I can master you." Although the young woman was angry at this interruption, she smiled and said: "By the Messiah, old Mother-of-Calamity, is this a joke, or do you really wish to wrestle with me?" "This is no joke," answered the old woman.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the young woman cried out: "Come on, then, if you are strong enough, O Mother-of-Calamity!" and leapt towards the old woman who stood strangled by anger, with all the hairs of her body pricked like a hedgehog's spines. "By the Messiah," said the old woman, "we must wrestle quite naked." And with that the nasty old creature undressed completely even to her drawers,

leaving only a handkerchief which fell below her navel. She stood for a moment in all the horror of her ugliness, most like a black and white striped snake, and then said to the young woman: "Why do you not do as I do?"

Slowly and delicately the girl undid her garments one by one and, when all were put aside, took off her drawers of immaculate silk. Then appeared thighs moulded of marble in their glory and above them a soft hill of milk and crystal, shining and round and tended, a scented belly with rosy dimples faintly breathing of musk and coloured like a garden of anemones; and a breast laden with twin pomegranates, swollen to ripeness and crowned with buds of the same.

As the two wrestlers leant forward and closed, Sharkan nearly died of laughing at the appearance of the old woman, and then, seeing the perfect harmony of the young one's body, lifted his head to the sky and prayed fervently to Allah for the victory of the fair one.

In the first exchange, the young wrestler slipped free, seized the old woman by the neck with her left hand, and, passing her right hand between the other's thighs, lifted her in the air and threw her heavily to the ground. She lay twisting about, with her legs waving in the air, so that she showed all the laughable horrors of her wrinkled and hairy flesh. Twice she terribly broke wind; at the first discharge a cloud of dust sprang up, and the second shot went fuming towards the moon.

Sharkan fell over with silent laughter but, when he got up again, he said: "Well is she called Mother-of-Calamity, for she is a Christian just as these others are Christians." Little by little he drew nearer the

lawn, and saw the young girl throw a silk veil over the nakedness of the old woman. She helped her into her clothes, saying: "Mistress, I only wrestled with you because you asked me; what happened afterwards is not my fault, for you slipped from between my hands. The Lord be praised that you are not hurt." The old woman made no answer, but fled rapidly in her confusion and disappeared within the monastery. On the lawn were only the ten young girls lying about their mistress.

Sharkan said to himself: "Destiny ever has some end in view. It was written that I should sleep on my horse and wake in this place. I have every hope that this desirable wrestler and her ten intoxicating companions may serve to pasture the fire of my longing." With that he mounted his horse and galloped, sword in hand, towards the lawn. His horse went like an arrow shot by a lusty arm and soon Sharkan was upon the lawn, crying: "Only Allah is great!"

The young woman jumped lightly to her feet when she saw him and running towards the river, which was more than six arms wide at that place, leapt lithely to the opposite bank and stood there. Then she cried with a loud musical voice: "Who are you who dare to trouble our solitude with a drawn sword, as if you were a soldier coming among soldiers? Tell me whence you come and whither you are going; and speak the truth, for a lie will only harm you and this is a place from which you will not easily get away. I have but to give a signal cry and four thousand Christian warriors will run to our assistance. Tell me what you want. If you are lost in the forest, we will put you upon your road again."

"I am a stranger, a Mussulman," answered Sharkan, "I am not lost, but am hunting for some booty of

young flesh which can pasture the fire of my longing tonight under the moonlight. These ten would seem to suit me well enough. If they are willing I will take them with me to my friends." "Insolent soldier," answered the young woman, "this pleasure of which you speak is not for you and, further, you lie as to the purpose of your coming." Sharkan replied: "O lady, happy is he who can be content with Allah and has no desire which is not centred in Him." "By the Messiah," said the young woman, "I would call the warriors to me and have you seized were I not naturally pitiful towards strangers, especially when they are young and handsome. I consent to this pasturing of your desires, on condition that you light off your horse and engage in single combat with me, swearing not to make use of your weapons. If you can put me upon my back, all these girls will belong to you and you can carry me away upon your horse. But if I conquer you, you will be my slave."

Thinking to himself that the girl knew nothing of his strength and that the combat would be easy, Sharkan said: "I promise to leave my weapons behind and to wrestle with you in the way you wish. If I am thrown, I have enough money on me to pay my ransom; if I win, I shall secure booty fit for a king. I swear on the goodness of the Prophet, upon whom be the prayer and peace of Allah." "Swear rather by Him, Who has inspired souls into the bodies of men and has given a law unto His people," said the young woman; and Sharkan swore.

The young girl leapt across the river again on to the lawn and laughed, saying to Sharkan: "I grieve to see you go, noble stranger, and yet it were better for you to go at once. For morning is at hand and how could you stand against my warriors when the

least and littlest of my women could overthrow you?" With that she made off towards the monastery without having said a word of the proposed wrestling match.

Sharkan called after her in his astonishment: "Spurn, if you will, a contest with me, my sweet mistress, but do not depart and leave a stranger so alone." She halted smiling and asked: "What do you wish, young stranger? Speak and it shall be accomplished." Sharkan answered: "Now that I have touched the ground which your feet have trodden and felt my heart sweetened with your courtesy, how can I go away before I have tasted of your hospitality? I am only a slave among your slaves." "What you say is right," she answered, and her smile became more winning. "It is a hard heart which will not entertain a guest. Remount your horse and ride opposite to me along the bank of the river. From henceforth you are my guest."

Joyfully Sharkan did as he was told and rode opposite the young woman and her followers until he came to a drawbridge of poplar wood, which was lowered across the river from the monastery gate by means of chains and pulleys. He dismounted and the young woman confided his horse to one of her slaves, bidding her see that it lacked for nothing. "My queen of fairness," said Sharkan to his hostess, "now have you become a thing doubly sacred to me because of your beauty and your hospitality. Why not turn back here and accompany me to my city of Baghdad, in the land of the Mussulmans, where you will see many marvels and true warriors? Also when we have reached there you will learn who I am. Come, dear Christian, come with me to Baghdad." "By the Messiah, I thought that you were a youth of sense," she said. "So you

wish to carry me off to that city, where I would fall into the hands of the terrible Omar Al-Neman, who has three hundred and sixty concubines for his bed, housed in a dozen palaces according to the days and months of the year? For one night I would serve those rough desires which are allowable to a Mussulman and then lie by neglected. Do not speak of this again and never hope to persuade me. Even if you were Sharkan himself, the son of Omar Al-Neman, whose armies, as I know, have marched into our territory, I would never listen to you. Ten thousand horsemen of Baghdad, led by Sharkan and the wazir Dandan, have crossed our frontiers to join their arms with those of Aphridonios, King of Constantinople. If I wished, I could go myself into the middle of their camp and kill Sharkan and Dandan with my own hand. They are the enemies of my people. Now come with me, young stranger."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Sharkan was mortified to learn the hatred in which he and Dandan and all the army were held by this young woman. If he had not listened to his evil genius he would have told her who he was and been rid of her. As it was, the rights of hospitality and the witchcraft of her beauty prevented him from doing this. Instead he recited these lines:

*A thousand sins you go about,
And then the sum begins again;
Because your beauty sins again
And blots the thousand out.*

She crossed the drawbridge slowly and made towards the monastery with Sharkan walking behind her. Thus he was able to see her sumptuous buttocks rising and falling like the waves of the sea. He regretted that the wazir Dandan was not there to wonder at their splendour with him; and there crossed his mind these words of the poet:

*Before my eyes were preparate
Her bottom slipped from out its wrapping:
Behold! two silver moons half separate,
Half overlapping.*

They came to a great door arched with transparent marble and by it entered a long gallery, running below a colonnade of alabaster, from the arches of which hung lamps of rock-crystal like mimic suns. A troop of young slaves, carrying sweet-scented candles, came to meet their mistress, with their heads cinctured by silk bands worked with coloured jewels. They fell in on either side and conducted the two young people into the principal hall of the monastery. Sharkan saw sumptuous cushions arranged in order along the wall and curtains hanging over the doors, each surmounted by a crown of gold. All the floor was inlaid with little chips of many-tinted marbles and a fountain basin rose in the middle of the hall, musically discoursing silver water through four and twenty golden mouths. A bed was spread with silk at the bottom of the hall and was of such a kind as is only found in kings' palaces.

“Lay yourself upon this bed and be at ease,” said the young woman; and, when Sharkan had done so, she left him alone with the young slaves.

As she did not return, Sharkan asked the girls what had become of her and was told that she was sleeping. While he sat there not knowing what to think of this, the slaves brought him every kind of appetising food on dishes of rare goldsmiths’ work. He ate all he could and then poured rose-water and orange-water upon his hands from a golden ewer, holding them over a golden bowl with silver pictures in relief upon it. Soon his mind began to be troubled for his soldiers, left alone in the valley; and he upbraided himself for having forgotten the counsels of his father. His anxiety increased when he considered that he knew nothing about his young hostess and was ignorant of the place in which he found himself.

He said over this song to himself:

I am a soldier led aside from duty

By many things.

I was an eagle, but the hand of beauty

Captured my wings.

I am a soldier whom you must not censure,

Seeing that she

Bound me and threw me, left me to adventure

In love’s dark sea.

and fell asleep. He woke in the morning to find the hall filled with a troop of twenty virgin slaves surrounding their mistress, as clear stars surround the moon. His hostess was dressed royally in figured silk. Her waist lay small and her haunches swelled wonderfully beneath a filigrane gold belt brightened with

pearls, so that her body might have been thought to be a silver branch let into a swell of diaphanous crystal. Also, because of the belt, her breasts came forward more proudly. Her hair was confined in a little chaplet of pearls; and she came towards him among her women, lifting the skirts of her robe and balancing in her beauty.

Sharkan forgot his soldiers, his wazir, and the counsels of his father. He rose up and proclaimed these lines:

*I have those eyes of magic fire
That pierce through silk
To find desire:
Balancing hips
Like sailing ships,
Dimpled and dancing and white as milk;
Wavering breasts
With crimson crests,
Like golden birds that shake their nests.*

When the young woman was quite near, she looked at him long and long and said suddenly: "You are Sharkan, son of Amar Al-Neman, the magnanimous, the light and honour of our dwelling. Speak to me and pretend no more. Leave lies to the liar, for a crooked word befits not one who is a king among kings."

Sharkan understood that nothing would be gained by denying his identity, so he answered: "O you who are very dear to me, I am indeed Sharkan, son of Omar Al-Neman, whom Destiny has thrown bound and defenceless at your feet. Do as you will with me, O unknown black-eyed girl!" The unknown reflected a moment with her lowered eyes and then looked at

Sharkan, saying: "Calm your fears and look not so sternly. Have you forgotten that you are my guest, that there is bread and salt between us, and much friendly conversation? You are under my protection and my loyalty shall advantage you. Fear not, for although all the world shall come against you, by the Messiah, I should die before they touched you." She sat down gently at his side with a very sweet smile and spoke to one of her slaves in the Greek tongue. The slave departed and fetched in a troop of servants carrying every sort of food on great plates, with jars and flasks of excellent wine. But Sharkan hesitated to touch these things, so the young girl said: "You fear that there is betrayal in the food and wine. Do you not know that I could have killed you any time since yesterday, if I had wanted to?" With that she took a mouthful from each plate and Sharkan was shamed out of his suspicions. They both ate their fill and then, after they had washed their hands, flower-crowned drinks were poured for them in bowls of gold, silver, and crystals of all colours. The young woman drank first and then filled again for Sharkan; as he drained the cup, she said: "Life is a pleasant and an easy thing, O Mussulman."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the two went on drinking till wine lifted their hearts and love

seeded deep in the soul of Sharkan. One of the young woman's slaves, named Coral-Pearl, retired and brought back with her four girls; one with a Damascus lute, one with a Persian harp, one with a Tartar cithern, and one with an Egyptian guitar. Sharkan's light-of-love took the lute and, to the accompaniment of the three girls, played and sang in a voice purer than the breeze or water gushing from a rock:

*Know you the surliest
Heart hid away from you,
Parted away from you,
Lies broken-hearted?
And mine with the earliest?*

*Know you how many
Slaughters your eyes have made,
Daughters your eyes have made
Waver as waters?
And I before any?*

She fell silent and one of the young girls sang a song in the Greek tongue which Sharkan did not understand. Then the mistress sang other songs of the same kind, one after the other, in such exquisite accord with the instruments that her voice might have proceeded from the hollow bodies of the mandores themselves. At length she asked Sharkan if he had understood the songs, and he answered: "I did not understand the words, but the moist smiling lips and the lightness of the fingers on the instruments I understood well enough. Also the sound and harmony of the words moved me more than a hundred songs with which I am familiar." She smiled and asked him what the effect of an Arab song would be upon him; and

he answered that the remainder of his wits would not survive it. Then she changed the key of her lute and sang this song of the poet:

*Though there is myrrh in the cup of parting,
Aloes in the bowl of setting forth,
And cassia in the wine of separation,
I could drain all three
Were they not offered by a hand I love.*

Hearing this song and also because he had drunken a great deal, Sharkan fell back insensible and when he woke the young woman was no longer beside him. "She has gone to her room to sleep," the slaves told him and, "Allah have her in his protection!" answered Sharkan.

Next morning Coral-Pearl came to Sharkan as soon as he was awake and conducted him to her mistress's apartment. He was received with the sound of instruments and welcoming songs as soon as he entered by the massive ivory door incrustated with pearls and jewels of a hundred dyes. He saw a great hall carpeted with silk rugs of Korassan and lighted by high windows giving upon leafy gardens and pleasant streams. Against the walls were ranged figures, dressed as if they were alive, which moved their arms and legs astonishingly and spoke and sang by some concealed device.

His hostess rose when she saw Sharkan and, taking him by the hand, made him sit down beside her. She asked him how he had passed the night and made other complimentary enquiries. At length she asked him if he knew any words of the poets concerning lovers and the slaves of love, and, hearing that he did, requested him to recite them. Said Sharkan: "This

is a song that the eloquent Kusir made for the fair Izzat whom he loved:

*I may not sing
The beauties that lie hid by Izzat's dress
Beneath her coloured clothes,
Because my oaths
Have undertaken not to tell this thing.*

If you could guess. . . .

*If you could guess,
Ascetics in the dust of chastity,
You would bow down in bands
Between her hands
And worship her in mystical excess.*

If you could see. . . ."

"Indeed, eloquence was his second nature," said the young woman. "I remember he also wrote:

*I dreamed that Izzat and the sun stood still
Before His chair whom beauty cannot blind,
He weighed their splendour with a patient skill
And Izzat was the brighter to His mind.*

*Yet women dare to say she has a flaw. . . .
May He who judged her perfect and complete
Break them in pieces utterly and straw
Their cheeks as yellow roses for her feet."*

The hostess said again: "How she was loved! Do you remember anything that Jamil wrote about her?" Said Sharkan: "I only recall this one stanza:

*I cannot call you cold,
For you desire
To melt my heart like gold
In a red fire.*

This I remember because I am that Jamil and you are Izzat who wish my death." The young woman smiled silently at these words and the two continued to drink together until morning came. With the first light she rose and disappeared, so that Sharkan had to sleep alone upon his couch.

On the third morning slaves conducted him as before, with the sound of music and beating upon little drums, until they brought him to a second apartment more marvellous than the first, filled with images and paintings of animals and birds. Sharkan was charmed with all he saw and sang these lines as he advanced:

*She rises with the burnished fruit
Of the Seven-pointed Archer,
A drop of gold among the steel of the stars,
A pearl announcing silver dawns,
Water flowing over silver,
A topaz with a gilded face,
The reincarnate ghost of all white roses.*

There is blue kohl about her mauve eyes.

The young woman took him by the hand and seated him beside her, saying: "Prince Sharkan, no doubt you can play chess?" "I know how to play, my lady," he answered, "but I fear the fate of the poet who wrote:

*For very love I cannot speak;
She sends for chess, her dreaming cheek
Shines rose above the pieces.*

*I lose my head, I lose my queen,
I lose my heart: was never seen
So quaint a game as this is.*

*I only take through skirmishing
A knight and rook, while my poor king
At every point she teases;
Yet I'd have triumphed after all
If we had but agreed to call
Knights nights and castles kisses."*

The young woman went smiling up to the chess board, and the game began. Sharkan, looking in her face, made every possible mistake, moving the knight for the elephant and the elephant for the knight, so that she won and laughed at him for his lack of skill. He excused himself because it was only the first game, and they ranged the pieces again; but she beat him five times and he could only find this to say: "My queen, to be beaten by you is in itself a victory." After this they ate and drank and she sang sweetly to the harp which was her favourite instrument, this song of long chords and dying cadences:

*Though fate is dark and time is strong,
They are not near so dark or strong as wine is;
So drink, my love,
And think, my love,
Though there are beauties in your song,
No beauty is so freely yours as mine is.*

She stopped and only the harp went on singing beneath her crystal fingers. Sharkan felt himself lost in infinite desire and prevailed upon her to sing again. This was her song:

*The moon is palest when she sets;
Only pretended love forgets.*

Hardly was this song finished when cries and a great tumult were heard without; a host of Christian warriors with naked swords rushed unto the apartment, crying: "Sharkan has fallen into our hands: death to Sharkan!" The young man at once thought that his hostess had betrayed him but, as he turned to reproach her, he saw her grow very pale and heard her ask the armed knights what they wanted. So Sharkan retired behind a pillar. He who was chief among the knights advanced and said: "Lady Abriza, glorious queen, pearl among the pearls of the waters, did you not know that this man was in the monastery?" "Of whom do you speak?" asked Queen Abriza, and the knight answered: "I speak of Sharkan, son of Omar Al-Neman, master of heroes, destroyer of cities; he who has never left a tower standing or a fortress unsubdued. Your father and our master, King Hardobios, learnt in Cesarea from her who is called Mother-of-Calamity that Sharkan himself was here and that she herself had seen him arrive at the monastery. To have caught such a lion in your toils is a notable deed, O queen; for with one stroke it shall destroy the Musulman army."

Queen Abriza, daughter of Hardobios, King of Cesarea, looked angrily at the leading warrior and asked him his name. "I am the knight Masurah, son of Masurah, son of Kashardah," he answered. "Insolent Masurah," she cried, "how did you dare to enter my monastery without warning and before soliciting an audience?" "My queen," he replied, "none of your porters barred my way, but rather they fell in beside me and brought me to your presence. Now

I wait for you to give up Sharkan to me as your father has ordered."

Then said Queen Abriza: "What is it that you are saying? Do you not know that old Mother-of-Calamity is the worst of liars? It is true that there is a man here, but he is far from being the Sharkan of whom you speak. He is a wandering stranger whom I am entertaining. But if he were Sharkan, the laws of hospitality would oblige me to protect him against the whole earth. It shall never be said that Abriza betrayed a guest, when there was bread and salt between them. There is nothing left for you to do, Sir Knight, save to return to my father the king and tell him the Mother-of-Calamity has deceived him."

"Lady," answered Masurah, "I cannot return to King Hardobios except with the man he commanded me to take." "You mix in affairs which do not concern you," cried the lady angrily. "You are paid to fight; therefore fight when you are ordered to do so, but leave loftier concerns to others more noble than yourself. If this stranger were Sharkan, and you attacked him, you would pay for your rashness with your life and the lives of all your followers. Wait, and I will bring him before you armed with sword and shield." Said the knight: "Unfortunately I have to choose between your anger and that of the king; so, if Sharkan presents himself before me, I will have him bound by my men and led in mean captivity to Cesarea." "You speak a great deal for a soldier, sir Masurah," exclaimed Abriza, "and yet you have not learnt to avoid pretension and insolence. You are a hundred to one; if this recent knighthood of yours has not extinguished all your courage, you will fight him man to man. If you are slain, another may take your place and then another, until Sharkan is overthrown.

This will be a means of deciding if there are many heroes among so knightly-seeming a band."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the knight Masurah made answer: "You counsel well; and I shall be the first to go up against him." "Wait till I tell him and hear his answer," replied the queen. "If he accepts, the fight shall be as I say; if he refuses he is still my honoured and protected guest."

Abriza went behind the pillar where Sharkan stood concealed and told him of the test she had proposed. Sharkan was thrown into consternation, both because he had doubted the young woman and because he had so foolishly ventured into the enemy's country. After a little thought, he said: "Lady, it is not my custom to fight against a single warrior, but against ten at a time." With these words he rushed towards the Christian warriors, with his sword on high and his shield well forward.

The knight Masurah bore down like a bolt upon Sharkan; but the Moslem stood firm against his onslaught and, leaping like a lion, gave him so terrible a shoulder-stroke that the bright blade whipped through the belly and intestines and came out by the thigh.

The young queen saw this and placed Sharkan upon

a higher throne within her heart, saying: "This is the man with whom I would have wrestled in the forest!" Then she cried to the rest of the knights: "Is there none to avenge your leader?" Masurah's brother, who was a giant of a man with a bold face and mighty muscles, strode towards Sharkan; but Sharkan did not give him time to strike a blow: his terrible sword cleft the second as the first and came out shining from his hip. One by one the other knights attacked him; but the lightning of his sword killed fifty of them. The remaining fifty threw themselves upon him in a mass but Sharkan received them with a breast harder than stone, a heart more finely tempered than his sword and scattered them like chaff upon the threshing-floor; so that their lives fled shrieking.

Queen Abriza cried to her servants to know if there were any men left in the monastery and, hearing that none remained but her own porters, she went to Sharkan and taking him in her arms kissed him, all bloody as he was. Then she counted the dead and found that there were eighty of them; for the other twenty had fled with their wounds upon them. When he heard the count, Sharkan wiped his bloody sword and taking Abriza by the hand, led her into the great hall, chanting these lines:

*The knights came to me,
They bade me defiance.
Ungird me now.*

*They wished to take me,
They looked for compliance.
Ungird me now.*

*I fed them all
To my brothers, the lions;
Ungird me now.*

Abriza kissed Sharkan's hand and, lifting her robe, showed him that she wore below it a coat of close mail and had girded about her a sword of finely tempered Indian steel. In answer to his surprise, she said: "I hastened to arm myself that I might come to your aid; but there was little need."

After this she called the monastery porters to her, and said: "Why did you let the king's men in without my permission?" "It is not usual," they answered, "to deny entry to the king's men or to the chief of all his knights." "You wished to shame me and to kill my guest," said Abriza, and begged Sharkan to cut off their heads. The young man did so, and the queen said to her other slaves: "They merited a worse fate." When they were left alone together again, she turned to Sharkan saying: "Now I will reveal all that I have so far kept hidden from you." She started her tale in these words:

"I am Abriza, the only daughter of Hardobios, the Greek king of Cesarea. The old woman, Mother-of-Calamity, who was my father's nurse and is still greatly considered in his palace, is my deadly enemy for a reason which I will not tell you now, as there are certain young girls mixed up in the affair about whom you are bound to hear at some future time. It is certain that Mother-of-Calamity will redouble her efforts for my destruction when she hears of the death of all these knights and will tell my father that I have embraced the Mussulman faith. My only hope of safety is to leave my native land; I ask you to help me to do so, and to deal with me as I have dealt with you,

seeing that you are in some sort the cause of what has happened."

Sharkan felt his breast expand with joy and all his soul ready to take flight, when she threw herself thus upon his protection. "By Allah," he cried, "who will dare come near you while I live? But my very dear, can you bear the separation from your father and your people?" "I can," she answered, "and my heart has ceased to be troubled. But I have one condition to impose upon you." "What is that?" he asked, and she answered, "That you return to Baghdad with all your soldiers." "Dear mistress," replied Sharkan, "my father, Omar Al-Neman, sent me into your country for the sole purpose of conquering your father, against whom King Aphridonios of Constantinople had asked our help. The cause of the war is that your father seized a ship loaded with treasures and young slaves and, above all, with three most valuable jewels of magic virtue." "Be at ease on that account," answered Abriza, "and listen to the true story of our enmity with King Aphridonios." She said:

"We Christian Greeks have an annual festival at this monastery; it lasts for seven days; and all the Christian kings are present at it, together with the nobles and great merchants, their wives and daughters. One year the daughter of King Aphridonios was present at this festival; her name was Saffia and she is now the concubine of your father, Omar Al-Neman, and the mother of a child by him.

"When the ceremonies were over, Saffia refused to return to Constantinople by land; so a ship was prepared for her and she set sail with all her companions and belongings. A contrary wind drove the vessel across the way of a mighty barque, in which five hundred Franks were journeying from the Isle of Kafur.

These were all armed to the teeth and did not let the occasion slip for making a profitable booty. They boarded the smaller boat and, putting her in irons, towed her behind them as a prize. A tempest rose, and both vessels were wrecked upon this coast; the men of these parts killed such pirates as remained, and captured all their treasure, including sixty young girls; among whom was Saffia. They gave the girls to my father as a present and kept the treasure for themselves. The King of Cesarea chose out the ten most beautiful of the maidens and parted the rest among his followers. Then, of the ten, he chose the five fairest, and sent them as a gift to King Omar Al-Neman. Though none of the people of this country knew who she was, Saffia, the daughter of Aphridonios, was one of the five sent to your father, with a present of rare silks and Greek embroideries.

“At the beginning of this year, the king my father received a letter from Aphridonios containing many insults which I cannot repeat, and these lines among the rest:

““Two years ago you captured sixty maidens from certain pirates, and did not let me know, O King Hardobios, that among them was my daughter, Saffia. That was a great wrong and a great shame. If you do not wish to become my enemy, send back my daughter, unsoiled and unharmed, as soon as you receive this letter. If you delay I will treat you as you deserve and my anger shall exact a terrible vengeance.”

“This letter placed my father in a considerable difficulty, since he had sent Saffia to Omar Al-Neman, who had had a child by her. It was therefore impossible to send her back in the state which her father demanded.

“My father realised that a great calamity had fallen upon him. He could do nothing but write a letter to Aphridonios, telling him all the truth and excusing himself; with a thousand vows as to his ignorance of the identity of the girls whom he had sent. When the King of Constantinople received this letter, his rage knew no bounds; he rose, he sat down again, he trembled and foamed at the mouth, saying: ‘By the true Christ, is it possible that my daughter, whom every Christian king has sought in marriage, has become the slave of a Mussulman, a plaything for his desires, a chattel of his bed! Verily I will take a vengeance on this unbeliever that shall astound the East and the West for many years to come.’

“Then it was, my dear Sharkan, that Aphridonios conceived a snare for Omar Al-Neman and sent ambassadors with rich gifts to make your father believe that he was at war with us and asking for assistance. In reality he planned to lead you and your ten thousand into a trap and destroy you all.

“The three miraculous gems of which you speak actually exist. They belonged to Saffia, were taken by the pirates, and came at length into the hands of my father, who gave them to me. I have them still and will some time show them to you. But for the moment, it is most urgent that you return to your soldiers and lead them back to Baghdad before they fall into the nets of the King of Constantinople.”

Sharkan kissed Abriza’s hand, saying: “Praise be to Allah who placed you upon my way that you might save my people. Delicate and helpful queen, I cannot leave you, after what has passed, to stay here alone, threatened by unknown dangers. Come with me, Abriza, come to Baghdad.”

But Abriza had had time to reflect, so she said:

“Set out immediately and seize the envoys that you have with you; make them confess, and you will know that what I have said is true. In three days I will rejoin you and we will go together to Baghdad.”

She rose weeping and took his head between her hands to kiss him. Sharkan wept also when she saw her tears, and murmured these lines:

*My tears are bitter on the lips that kiss me,
Though they are honey-sweet in their good-bye;
For though they mourn for me and say they miss me,
Only not all lips lie.*

Sharkan left Abriza and, mounting his war-horse, which two girls were holding, galloped off. He crossed the drawbridge and rode by forest paths until he came to the clearing. Hardly had he entered this than he saw three riders check their horses at sight of him. He had drawn his sword lest their intentions should be hostile when he recognised them as the wazir Dandan and his two principal emirs. They lighted off their horses and greeted the prince respectfully, telling him with what foreboding his absence had filled the army. Sharkan related his story and informed them of the treachery which King Aphridonios had plotted his envoys, saying: “It is likely that they have taken advantage of your absence to escape from the army and warn their king of our arrival in his territory. His people may have destroyed our soldiers already. Let us return as quickly as possible.”

They galloped with all speed until they came to the valley, where they found that their army was safe, but that the envoys had disappeared. The camp was struck in haste and the whole army retreated until they came safe into the outskirts of their own country.

The people gave them food and fodder for their horses; and the troop rested there for some time. Then Sharkan sent the wazir Dandan forward with all the army save a hundred picked knights, whom he chose to act as rearguard with him and with whom he set out a day after the rest.

Two parasangs from where they started, they came to a narrow defile between two rocky hills, from the other end of which they saw a thick cloud of dust advancing. It came on rapidly and cleared as it approached, showing a hundred knights clad in coats of mail and vizors of steel, who cried: "Dismount and give up your arms, O Mussulmans; or by Mary and John we will slay you all!"

The air about Sharkan darkened with his anger, his eyes blazed and his cheeks suffused. "Christian dogs," he cried, "Do you dare to threaten us, after having had the impudence to cross our frontier? Do you think to speak these saucy words to us and return safe to your own country? Come, charge the dogs, you Faithful!" With this he set heels to his horse and rode forward followed by his hundred. The two troops met with a great clang of battle, spear fell on spear and sword on sword, body upon body and horse on horse, so that nothing was heard but the din of arms till nightfall. When they could no longer see to fight the two troops separated; and Sharkan discovered that not one of his men had received any serious hurt, so he addressed them as follows:

"Comrades, you know that all my life I have swum in a sea of battles, beaten by the waves of many swords, and have fought with heroes not a few, but I have never found such valorous and knightly foes as we have fought with this day."

His men answered: "What you say is true, Prince

Sharkan; especially of the chief of these Christians, who is the bravest and most courteous. Each time one of us was at his mercy he turned aside and let us escape."

Sharkan was perplexed at this, and said: "We are a hundred against a hundred, so tomorrow we will attack them in full line of battle and pray to Allah for the victory." Then the Mussulman troop lay down and slept.

In the meanwhile the Christians had surrounded their chief, saying: "We have not been victorious today." And their leader answered: "Tomorrow we will attack them and overthrow them one by one." With that the knights also slept.

When morning had come—and the sun rose fair upon the warlike and the unwarlike, praising the Prophet for the beauties of this world—Prince Sharkan mounted his horse and rode forward between two ranks of his warriors, saying to them: "Our foes are drawn up for battle. Let one of you go forward and challenge one of them to single combat, so that each in his turn may bear the assault of Destiny."

Immediately one of Sharkan's cavaliers rode from the ranks towards the enemy, crying in a loud voice: "Oh, is there any will fight with me?" Hardly had he spoken when one of the Christian knights, covered in shining arms from head to foot, gleaming with silk and gold, mounted on a grey horse and showing a ruddy hairless face below his helmet, pricked forward and hurled his horse upon the champion. With one trick of the lance, he unseated the Mussulman and led him back captive to the Christian rank. The brother of the captive next rode out; a knight engaged him and, taking advantage of a false thrust, dashed him to the ground with the heel of his lance and took him

prisoner. By nightfall twenty of Sharkan's men had thus been captured in single combat.

Sharkan was angry at so many victories, and said to the remnant of his followers: "This is a strange thing which has happened to us. Tomorrow I myself will fight the leader of these men and learn his reason for thus violating our territory. If he refuses to explain, we will kill him; but if he be amenable, we will make peace."

Next morning Sharkan advanced alone towards the enemy and a knight came forward to meet him on horseback, surrounded by fifty warriors on foot, who wore a blue silk cloak over his close-woven coat of mail and waved a sword of Indian steel above his head. He rode a black horse with a white mark like a silver coin on its forehead; and had himself the rosy beardless cheeks of a very youth, together with a moon-like beauty that was more than mortal.

This young knight addressed Sharkan in the purest Arabic, saying: "Sharkan, son of Omar Al-Neman, leaguer of towns and cities, destroyer of towers, prepare for battle. We are both leaders, so let the army of him who conquers hold the field." Sharkan charged like an angry lion; and the heroes met as if two mountains were in combat, or two great seas were warring with each other. They fought till night was black and then each returned to his own people.

On his return, Sharkan said: "I have never met with such an adversary! Each time that his opponent uncovers a vital part, he touches it lightly with the heel of his lance instead of sending the steel home. I do not understand what he would be at; but I could wish that we had men like him in our army."

On the morrow this mighty duel raged all day and neither warrior gained the advantage; but on the third

day, the young Christian reined in his horse at full gallop, so that it fell and he was thrown to earth as if by accident. Sharkan leapt from his courser and was about to pass his sword through the body of his assailant, when the fallen Christian cried: "Is this the way of heroes? Is this how a gallant warrior treats a woman?" Sharkan looked closely at the speaker and recognised Queen Abriza.

He threw away his sword and knelt before the young girl, saying: "What is the meaning of this, O fairest of all queens?" "I wished to try your valour," answered Abriza. "My hundred warriors are all maidens of my train. If my horse had not stumbled it might not have gone so well with you, dear Sharkan." The youth smiled as he said: "Praise be to Allah for reuniting us!" Abriza gave up her twenty prisoners to Sharkan and, when all his men had kissed the earth between her hands, the prince turned to the virgin warriors and said: "There is no king who would not think himself fortunate to have such heroes to fight for him."

Without further delay the two hundred set out together and in six days they saw far off the shining towers of the City of Peace.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHARKAN BEGGED ABRIZA and her followers to put off their warlike dress and habit themselves again as

Grecian women. They did so; and the prince sent certain of his cavaliers forward to announce their coming to Omar Al-Neman. They camped where they were that night, and at dawn, as they were taking their way towards the city, Dandan rode forth to greet them with a thousand horsemen and, kissing the earth between the hands of the two young people, led them into the city.

Omar Al-Neman rose when he saw his son and, kissing him, asked his news. Sharkan told him the whole story of his adventures with Abriza, the daughter of Hardobios, king of Cesarea, and informed him of the sultan of Constantinople's treachery and the reason for it. Then he dwelt on the hospitality, good sense, and warlike qualities of Abriza, until the king grew most anxious to see her. Deep down in his heart he savoured the idea of feeling that virgin and doughty body in his bed; nor did he disdain the thought of her hundred followers, fresh girls encased in warlike steel: for he was a very muscular old man, able to rise triumphant from between the arms of women so ardent that they would have put a younger man to shame.

Sharkan, who could not see into his father's mind, led young Abriza into the king's presence. Omar dismissed all save his eunuchs and, when Abriza kissed the earth between his hands and spoke to him in pure and elegant Arabic, he marvelled and thanked her heartily for all the favour that she had shown to his son. He bade her seat herself and, when she had done so and removed her veil, his reason fled before the fairness of her face. Not until he had given orders for the most sumptuous apartments in the palace to be consigned to her and her followers, did he broach the subject of the three miraculous jewels.

"Those three white stones never leave me; I will

show them to you," said Abriza. She sent for a chest from among her baggage and drew from it a box; from the box she took a golden jewel case, and from the jewel case three great round shining gems. She kissed them and gave them to Omar Al-Neman as a guest-present; then she retired.

Omar Al-Neman felt his heart go with her; he sent for Sharkan and gave him one of the stones. The young man asked what was to become of the other two, and the king answered: "I shall give one to your little sister, Nuzhat, and the other to your little brother, Al-Makan."

Sharkan was much disturbed on hearing for the first time of the existence of Al-Makan, and said: "Father, have you another son beside myself!" "Indeed I have," answered Omar, "he is at present six years old, for he was born at one birth with Nuzhat. His mother is Saffia, daughter of the king of Constantinople." Sharkan could not help shaking the dust from his garments at this unwelcome news, but he controlled himself, and said: "May Allah bless them both!" Nevertheless the king saw that his son's mind was troubled, and said to him: "My child, why are you so disturbed? You know well that the throne is destined for you; and also that I gave you the most beautiful of the three jewels." Sharkan could not answer; so, not wishing to displease his father, he bowed his head and left the hall where they had been talking. He made his way into Abriza's apartment where he was gently received and bidden to sit down. When the princess asked why his brow was clouded with care, he told her of Al-Makan, and added: "But that is not the chief cause of my worry, dear Abriza. I am sure that I have seen signs in my father of a strong desire towards your most dear self. What do you say

to that?" "You can set yourself quite at ease on that score," she answered. "Your father will never possess me in my lifetime. He has three hundred and sixty women to satisfy him and my virginity was not destined for a man so fully occupied. Do not take any further thought on my account." After this they ate and drank together and Sharkan returned to his own place to sleep, a prey to gloomy thoughts.

As soon as Sharkan left him, King Omar Al-Neman took up the two jewels and went to visit his concubine, Saffia. Saffia rose as he entered and the two children, Nuzhat and Al-Makan, ran to greet their father. He delighted them by hanging the two jewels round their necks on light gold chains and then turned to their mother, saying: "Why did you never tell me, dear Saffia, that you are the daughter of King Aphrionios of Constantinople? If I had known I could have given you hospitality more in accord with your noble birth." "Generous king," answered Saffia, "what could you give me that I have not got? You have heaped benefits upon me, and made me the mother of these two fair little ones." King Omar was delighted by the delicacy and tact of this answer and immediately assigned to Saffia a more beautiful palace and augmented both her income and her retinue. Then he returned to his diwan to judge the people according to his custom.

But from that day his heart was tortured with thoughts of young Abriza; he spent all his evenings conversing with her and dropping hints of his desire. But the queen would ever answer him that she had no wish for men; and this reply so teased and excited him that he fell ill. At last he had recourse to his

wazir Dandan, and asked him how he might come to possess the woman of his choice.

Dandan considered for a while and then said: "O king, when you go to visit Abriza tonight take with you a morsel of banj and slip it into her drink; then when she has reached her bed you can master her and calm the fever in your blood. "That is an excellent plan, and as far as I can see the only one," answered the king.

He chose out a little piece of banj, the smell of which would have sent an elephant to sleep from one year's end to the other, and carried it in his pocket when he went to visit the young queen. As they were talking together he expressed a desire for wine, and the wine-set was brought, with fruits and nuts of all sorts and gold and crystal cups. When the drinking had a little risen to Abriza's head Omar poured out a cup and drank the half of it himself. Into the other half he secretly slipped the drug and handed it to the queen, saying: "Drink this for my sake, royal girl." Abriza laughingly drained the cup, but scarcely had she done so when the apartment reeled before her eyes and she had just the strength to drag herself to her bed. She fell back on it with stretched arms and parted thighs, and lay there in the light of two great torches.

Omar Al-Neman came near and untied the silk cord of her ample drawers. These he drew down gently until the queen was covered only by a light chemise. He lifted this last veil and that which appeared between her thighs, minutely detailed in the strong light of the torches, ravished his soul. Nevertheless he found patience to undress and put himself at ease, before throwing himself upon the young body before him and covering it. Who knows what passed that

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2071, 2072, 2073, 2074



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"King Omar Al-Neman"

night! . . . Thus Queen Abriza lost her virginity.

The king rose and found Coral-Pearl in the adjoining room. "Run quickly to your mistress; for she has need of you," he said. Abriza's favourite slave ran to her mistress and found her lying on her back with her chemise pulled up and her thighs stained with blood. Coral-Pearl understood from the pale face of the queen that instant cares were needed; so she wiped the dishonour of her mistress with a kerchief and cleaned her belly and thighs with a second. After that she sprinkled her face, her hands, and her feet with rose-water; and washed her lips and mouth with orange-water.

Abriza sneezed and opened her eyes, saying to Coral-Pearl: "Ah, tell me what has happened, for I feel ill." The slave could but tell her mistress in what a state she had found her, so that Abriza understood that Omar Al-Neman had satisfied his desires to her irreparable loss. She fell into a black grief and ordered Coral-Pearl to refuse all entrance to her apartment and to tell King Omar that she was ill.

When the king received this message he sent slaves daily to Abriza with meats and wines of every sort, cups full of fruits and jams, and porcelain bowls frothing with sweet creams; but for many weeks she stayed shut up in her apartment; until she perceived that her belly was waxing and that she was certainly with child. The world lay in ruins before her eyes and she would in no wise listen to the consolations of Coral-Pearl. At length she said to her slave: "I alone am responsible for what has happened, for I sinned against myself in leaving my own kingdom. Life means no more to me, my courage has gone from me, and my strength has failed. I who was Abriza, a thing of flame and prowess, have lost my might with

my virginity. I could not stand up against a child or hold the reins of my horse. What shall I do, what shall I do? If I am brought to bed here, these pagan women will laugh at me when they have learnt the manner of my ravishing; yet if I return to my father's house, how will I dare to look him in the face. Indeed the poet knew the truth of things when he wrote:

*No native land, no family,
No home, awaits adversity."*

"Dear mistress, I am your slave, my life is yours; command me in all things and I will obey," said Coral-Pearl. "Then listen carefully," answered Abriza, "I have no course open to me except to leave this palace secretly and return to my father and mother; for when a body stinks, its family must look to it; and I am no better than a lifeless body." "That is the best thing that you can do," said Coral-Pearl, and forthwith she began to make secret preparations for departure. It was necessary, however, for Abriza to wait for a suitable occasion, when the king should be hunting and Sharkan inspecting the strongholds on the frontier. These two things did not happen at one and the same time until Abriza was near her term. At last the moment came when she said to Coral-Pearl: "We must leave this very night, for I shall bear a child in three or four days, and I would rather die than do so in this palace. You must find some man to accompany us, for my arm has lost its power." "I know of one man who would defend us very well," answered Coral-Pearl; "one of the king's porters, a gigantic negro called Sullen, who was once a highwayman, and to whom I have accorded many favours. I will give him gold and promise that when we arrive in our own

country he shall wed the fairest girl in Cesarea." "Rather bring him to me, my child," said the queen, "and I will arrange matters with him."

Coral-Pearl found the negro and led him to her mistress, saying as they went: "Your fortune is made, O Sullen, if you do all that my mistress tells you." When the queen saw the blackamoor, a violent repulsion swelled in her heart, but, as necessity knows no law, she smiled on him and said: "Do you think, O Sullen, that you could help us in our difficulties and, at the same time, keep a secret? I wish you to prepare two mules for our baggage and two horses for ourselves: then you must help us to escape tonight and, when we have reached my country, I will marry you to the fairest of the Greeks and give you more gold than you can dream of. If you wish to return to your own land, you will be able to do so as a rich man."

The negro, Sullen, who had felt all his desires passionately excited by his first glimpse of Abriza, answered: "All shall be as you say, my mistress; I consecrate my life to your service. I go to make my preparations." With that he departed, thinking to himself: "What a booty and what a chance of securing it! I shall enjoy myself in the flesh of these two moons; and if either of them resist, I will kill them and make off with their treasure."

That night all three set off under cover of darkness, but on the fourth day of their journey the queen felt her pains come on her and was obliged to call a halt. "It is the end," she said and called to the negro to lift her down and to Coral-Pearl to stay by her and help her in her labour.

When all three had dismounted, Sullen, who now had an opportunity of seeing all the charms of the queen, was so moved that his zebb swelled terribly and

lifted his garment in front of him. Being unable to contain himself, he pulled it forth and went up to the young woman, who was like to faint from horror and indignation, saying: "Pity me, mistress, and let me have you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Queen Abriza answered: "Black man, son of a black man, son of a slave; do you dare thus to expose yourself before me? How great is my shame that I lie defenceless in the hands of the lowest slave that ever crawled. If God should help me and cure these womanish parts which make me weak, I will punish you with my own hand. I would rather kill myself and be quit once and for all of the sufferings and sorrows of my life than to be touched by one of your fingers!" Then she extemporised these lines:

*Though I have suffered much,
I will not suffer you;
God will ward off the greasy smutch
Of your black touch.*

*Though I am cut to earth,
I will not suffer you;
The clean child of a noble birth,
My blood has worth.*

*You lust with your beast's eyes,
I will not suffer you;
Thing of obscene black thighs
And filthy destinies,
I will not suffer you.*

When Sullen heard these lines his face swelled with rage, his nostrils dilated, his fat lips gave back from his teeth, and he cried these lines:

*Your angry voice
Might drive aback raw boys
When they aspire,
My lust's too high,
There's lighted in my eyes
Too fierce a fire;
Lash me with words
Or ring your bed with swords,
I'll come to my desire.*

Abriza wept with rage at these lines, and cried out: "Do you think that all women are alike, indecent slave, black child of shame, that you dare to speak to me in this way?" Then Sullen, seeing that the queen would have nothing to do with him, flung himself upon her in a fury and, seizing her by the hair, passed his sword through her body. Thus died Queen Abriza at the hands of a negro slave.

Sullen seized the mules which carried Abriza's treasure and, driving them before him, fled into the mountains; while the queen, as she breathed her last sigh, gave birth to a son between the hands of Coral-Pearl. The faithful slave covered her head with dust, tore her garments and beat herself about the face until the blood came, crying: "Alas, alas, for my mistress! The warrior, the valorous girl!"

Hardly had the young slave ceased to mourn, when she saw a cloud of dust filling the sky and coming rapidly towards her; as it approached she could see that it was raised by mounted soldiers dressed in the fashion of Cesarea. Indeed, the oncoming troop was none other than the army of King Hardobios, which he was leading against Baghdad on the news that his daughter had fled from her monastery.

Hardobios came at length to the place where his daughter lay dead and, when he saw her blood-stained body, he fell in a dead faint from his horse; while Coral-Pearl wept and lamented the more bitterly. When the king came to himself she told him what had happened, adding: "The murderer was one of the negroes of Omar Al-Neman, the licentious king who outraged my dear mistress." Hardobios saw the world turn black before his eyes when he heard this and resolved to take terrible vengeance for his daughter; but first he had Abriza's body borne back to Cesarea in a litter, for honourable burial.

As soon as he reached his palace he called for Mother-of-Calamity, his nurse, and said: "See what the Mussulmans have done to my daughter! The king has ravished her, a slave has killed her, and that which Coral-Pearl is holding is her base-born child. I swear by the Messiah that I will avenge my daughter and my shame, or die by my own hand." With that he wept hot tears, and Mother-of-Calamity said to him: "Take no thought for this vengeance, my king, for I concern myself about it. I will kill this unbeliever and his children in such a way that tales shall be told of my vengeance for years to come and over the whole earth. Only you must listen carefully to what I say and help me in this manner: choose out the five most beautiful and high-breasted virgins in Cesarea and, at the same

time, call before you the most learned and expert Mussulman teachers who are in your kingdom. It will be the business of the teachers to instruct the virgins in the Unbelievers' law, in Arab history, the annals of the khalifats, the acts of the heathen kings, etiquette, conversation, and polite drinking, poetry, and elocution, verse-writing and the art of song. Their education must be complete even if it takes ten years; for the Arabs have a saying: 'Revenge is still new after forty years': and my revenge depends upon the thorough instruction of these girls. To ease your mind in the meanwhile, I tell you that this heathen king has a passion for coupling with his slaves; he owns three hundred and sixty concubines as well as the hundred maidens left by Abriza and women sent to him as tribute from all lands. It is by this weakness that I shall destroy him."

Hardobios rejoiced greatly and, kissing his nurse's head, sent straightway for the Mussulman teachers and the high-breasted virgins.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Hardobios lavishly gave both instruction and gifts to the teachers and confided the chosen girls to them. Thereafter the learned men took special pains to give their young charges the finest Mussulman education.

When Omar Al-Neman returned from hunting and

learnt that Abriza had disappeared, he cried out in his grief and anger: "How could a woman pass from my palace and no one know it? If my kingdom is as well guarded, I am like to lose my throne. Another time I shall know how to have the gates well sentinelled." As he was speaking, Sharkan also returned and learnt the news about Abriza from his father. From that time the young prince could hardly support life at his father's court, especially as he saw that his small brother and sister occupied all the attention of the king. Day by day he became sadder, until at last Omar Al-Neman noticed it and asked the reason for his sorrow. "My father," answered Sharkan, "there are many reasons why it is intolerable for me to remain in the palace. As a last favour, I would ask you to make me governor of one of your outlying strongholds, that I may end my days far off from Baghdad. A poet has said:

*Were I to stay,
I'd see the places where her absence is
And hear her silences:
Let me away."*

King Omar understood his son's sorrow, and consoled him, saying: "My child, it shall be as you wish; the city of Damascus is the most important outpost of my kingdom: I appoint you its governor." He sent for his nobles and the palace scribes and appointed Sharkan governor of Damascus, both by speech and in writing. The prince said good-bye to his father and mother, gave last instructions to the wazir Dandan, and set out at the head of a cavalcade amid the good wishes and protestations of the emirs. When he arrived at Damascus, the people ornamented and

illuminated the city in honour of his coming, and a great procession went out to meet him to the sound of fifes, cymbals, trumpets, and clarions; those to whom it was due walking upon the right hand, and the rest upon the left.

Soon after the departure of his son, King Omar was approached by those who were in charge of the education of Nuzhat and Al-Makan with the information that the children had completed their studies and had nothing more to learn, either of book-knowledge or of deportment. The king was delighted to hear this and sent the teachers away with magnificent presents. He soon saw for himself that Al-Makan, who was now fourteen, had become a graceful, handsome, and accomplished cavalier; yet one much given to piety and consorting by preference with learned men, poets, and experts in the Law and the Koran. The men and women of Baghdad loved him and blessed him.

One day certain pilgrims passed through Baghdad on the way from Irak to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage and a visit to the tomb of the Prophet in Medina. (The prayer and peace of Allah be upon him!) When Al-Makan saw the saintly procession, his piety flamed up and he ran to his father, saying: "Can I have your permission to go on pilgrimage?" Omar Al-Neman tried to dissuade him, saying: "You are too young, my son; but next year, if Allah wills, I will go on pilgrimage myself and take you with me."

Al-Makan found this too long to wait, so he ran to his twin sister, Nuzhat, and found her at prayer. When she had made an end of praying, he said: "Dear sister, I am consumed by a desire to go on pilgrimage and to see the tomb of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!); but our father will not give me

leave; so I am determined to take a little money with me and set out secretly without telling him anything about it." Nuzhat was taken with the same ardour, and cried: "I conjure you by Allah to take me with you and not to deprive me of the chance of seeing the tomb of the Prophet, on whom be prayer and peace!" "Be it so," said her brother, "Come to look for me at dusk tonight; and take care not to tell anybody."

That night Nuzhat dressed herself as a man in certain clothes of her brother's, who was much of a size with her; and, providing herself with some money, went out of the palace gate. There she found Al-Makan with two camels on which they set off; and arrived under cover of darkness in the middle of the band of pilgrims. Next morning the caravan from Irak left Baghdad and proceeded towards Mecca where, by the mercy of Allah, all arrived in safety.

Al-Makan and Nuzhat rejoiced exceedingly when they came to mount Arafat and accomplished the sacred rites upon its summit. After that they visited the tomb of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) and, when the pilgrims returned to their own country, preferred to extend their journey and see the sacred city of Abraham, the Friend of God; which Jews and Christians call Jerusalem. They joined a small caravan which was going in that direction and made the journey with a certain amount of difficulty, and on the way, both Al-Makan and Nuzhat were stricken with fever. The girl recovered after a few days; but the boy became worse and was very ill when they reached Jerusalem. His sister settled him in a small room in one of the khans; but he became delirious and Nuzhat nursed him in grief and anxiety, feeling that she was a stranger and had no one to turn to.

As Al-Makan's illness continued, Nuzhat spent the last of their money and sold her garments one by one through the porter of the khan; until she had nothing but the robe she wore and the ragged rug which served them for a bed. On the evening that they came to the end of their resources and Nuzhat sat weeping in the little room, Al-Makan recovered consciousness by Allah's grace, and said to his sister: "I feel my strength returning to me; I could very well eat a grill of skewered mutton." "But how shall I buy it for you?" answered Nuzhat. "I cannot make up my mind to beg in the public streets. Tomorrow, though, I will hire myself as a servant to some rich notable and make a little money. I do not mind doing that; except that I shall have to be away from you all day. There is neither power nor might save in Allah, and He alone can send us safe back to Baghdad."

With that she wept again but next morning set out cheerfully from the khan, though not knowing where to go after having lovingly embraced her brother and veiled her face with a remnant of camel's-hair cloth which a neighbour had given her. Al-Makan waited all that day and night and then all the next day and the next night; but his sister did not return. He grew very troubled and, though he had not eaten for two days, dragged himself to the door and begged the porter of the khan to help him to the market. The porter lifted the boy on his shoulders, carried him to the market and, setting him down against the closed door of a ruined shop, wished him well and went his way.

The merchants and passers-by clustered about Al-Makan and mourned over his pitiable state. When he made signs to them that he would eat, they made a collection for him on a copper plate among the mer-

chants, and bought him food. As thirty dirhams remained, they consulted how best to use it; and an old man belonging to the market said: "The best thing that we can do is to hire a camel and send the poor young man to the hospital which has been opened in Damascus by the kindness of the khalifat. If he stays here he will surely die." All determined to adopt this advice; but, as it was late, they put off doing so until the morrow and returned to their homes when the market was shut, leaving water and food by the side of Al-Makan and lamenting his fate out of the kindness of their hearts. The young man was too feeble to eat or drink and passed a sleepless night; in the morning the good folk of the market hired a camel and told its owner to carry the youth to the Damascus hospital. The man answered: "I shall certainly do so, my lords," but in his own mind the rascal thought: "To think that I shall carry a dying man from Jerusalem to Damascus!" He set off among the blessings of the bystanders; but, after he had passed through a few streets, stopped at the door of the hammam, and laid Al-Makan down in a dead swoon on a pile of wood which was used to heat the baths. Then he hurried off as fast as his beast would take him.

The fireman of the hammam came to his work at dawn and, seeing the body, said to himself: "Who has thrown this dead man here?" He was on the point of dragging Al-Makan further off, when the young man made a movement. "He is not dead then!" cried the fireman. "But surely he has eaten hashish and fallen upon my wood without knowing it. Hulloo, drunkard! Hashish-man!" he bellowed, and in so doing brought his face close to that of the young man. When he saw that he was but a beardless boy and both beautiful and noble-looking in spite of the ravages of

fever, the fireman felt his heart filled with pity. "There is no power or might save in Allah!" he said to himself. "Here am I rashly judging a poor invalid stranger when our Prophet (on whom be the prayer and peace of Allah!) told us to guard against hasty judgments and to be kind to the stranger and the distressed." Without further consideration, he lifted the young man on his shoulders and, returning to his own house, confided him to the care of his wife. She bedded him softly with rug and clean pillow, heated water in the kitchen, and washed his hands, feet, and face. In the meanwhile the fireman brought rose-water and sugar, sprinkled the face of his guest with the former, and gave him a sherbert to drink made of both articles. Also he took a clean shirt, perfumed with jasmin, from his great chest and dressed Al-Makan in it.

The boy felt a sweet coolness enter his body under these cares and revived as if a delicious west wind blew upon him. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Al-Makan could now lift his head a little on the pillows. When the fireman saw him do so, he cried out joyfully: "Praise be to Allah that he has restored this young man's health! Oh, may He grant, in His infinite mercy,

that I can cure him altogether!" For three more days he made prayer for his guest's recovery, and dosed him with refreshing decoctions of rose-water, attending to him in every way. Strength came back little by little to Al-Makan's body and, at length, he was able to open his eyes and breathe freely. At the very moment when his fever lifted, the fireman entered; and finding him seated, cheerful and without pain, said: "How are you feeling, my son?" "I feel both strong and well," answered the boy, so the fireman thanked Allah and ran to the market, where he bought ten of the plumpest chickens. He returned with them to his wife, saying: "Prepare two every day for our guest, one in the morning and one in the evening."

The woman straightway killed a chicken and boiled it, making the young man eat the flesh and drink the broth. Then she gave him water for his hands and covered him warmly, so that he fell into a peaceful sleep which lasted till midday. When he woke, she boiled and carefully carved a second chicken, saying: "Eat, my child, and restore your strength." As Al-Makan was eating the fireman came in and sat down by the bed, saying: "How is it with you, my boy?" "Thanks to Allah, I am well and even vigorous," answered the youth. "I pray fervently that He will shower His benefits upon you." Delighted with this answer, the good man hurried again to the market and returned with syrup of violets and rose-water, which he gave his invalid to drink.

Now the fireman only earned five dirhams a day; for a whole month he set aside two of these five for chickens, sugar, rose-water, and syrup of violets; which completely restored Al-Makan and removed every trace of illness from his face. When the fireman

and his wife saw that he was thoroughly recovered, the former suggested that the boy should take a bath at the hammam for his health's sake, and himself hired a donkey on which he carefully led his guest to the hammam. While Al-Makan was undressing, the fireman bought all that was necessary for the bath and then, invoking the name of Allah, began to rub the boy's body from the feet up. Soon the rubber of the baths came in and, being thrown into confusion by the sight of the fireman usurping his functions, excused himself for coming so late. "Good friend," answered the fireman, "I am delighted both to take a little work off your shoulders and to wait on this young guest of mine." Al-Makan was shaved, depilated, and washed; then dressed in a fine shirt, one of his host's best robes, and a tasteful turban; girt round the waist with a belt of many-coloured linen, and carried back to the house on the ass.

The fireman's wife had prepared the whole dwelling for his reception: the place had been washed, and the rugs and cushions cleaned and refreshed. The fireman put his guest to bed and gave him first a rose sherbert and then one of the chickens carved by his own hands. When the youth had eaten and drunk his fill, he thanked Allah for his safety and said to his host: "How much do I now owe you for all that you have done for me?" "Do not speak of that my son," said the good man. "There is one thing which I want to ask you, for you seem by your face and manner to be well-born: where do you come from and what is your name?" "Tell me first, I pray you, where and how you found me," answered Al-Makan, "and then I will tell you my story."

"I found you on a pile of wood by the hammam, when I went to work one morning; I do not know who

left you there. I brought you to my house and that is all," said the fireman, and the boy cried: "Praise be to Him who makes dead bones to live again! My father and my friend, you have not succoured an ingrate; some day I hope to prove that to you. Tell me in what country I am." "You are in the sacred city of Jerusalem," answered his host; whereupon the young man reflected bitterly on his far exile and his separation from his sister, till the tears came and he sorrowfully told his story to the fireman, without revealing the nobility of his birth. Then he recited these lines:

*My burden is more grave than I can bear;
For, when I asked in parting from my fair:
"Dear child, can you not wait a little while?"
She said: "Oh, waiting's neither here nor there."*

"Do not weep, my child, but rather thank Allah for your safe delivery," said the fireman; and then, when Al-Makan asked him how far it was to Damascus, answered that the journey would take six days. "Ah, how I wish to go there!" said the boy. "Young master," answered his host, "I cannot let so young a boy go to Damascus; it would not be safe. If you insist on going, I shall accompany you and perhaps my wife also, for they say that it is a fair city, rich in water-courses and fruit trees." With that he turned to his wife, saying: "Child of my uncle, will you come with us to the delightful city of Damascus or would you rather wait here for my return? You will see that I, at least, must go with him, both because I cannot bear to be separated from him and because the people of Damascus have a reputation for corruption and excess." "I will accompany you with all my heart,"

answered his wife, and the fireman cried out joyfully: "Praise be to Allah who has made us agree upon this point!" Without further delay, he got together all his household goods: his rugs, his cushions, his cooking pots, his cauldrons and mortars, his tables and mattresses: and sold them for fifty dirhams. With part of this money he hired an ass for the journey. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the fireman made Al-Makan ride upon the ass while he and his wife walked behind, until they came at last to the city of Damascus on a certain evening; and the woman and the boy put up at a khan while the fireman went to buy food and drink for the three of them.

They stayed at the khan for five days and there the fireman's wife, who was worn out by the journey, took a fever from which she passed into the infinite mercy of Allah.

Al-Makan, who had become very fond of his faithful nurse, took her death very much to heart. He tried to comfort the poor fireman in his grief, saying: "Do not be sad too much, my father, for we all travel that road and go in by that door at last." The elder man turned to him, and said: "May Allah reward you for your compassion, my child, and also one day change our sorrows into perfect joy. As you say, the same end is written for all of us; therefore let us not

grieve too long. Rather, as I wish you to be happy and at ease after your own affliction, let us go out and explore this city which we have not yet had time to see."

The young man consented; and they wandered hand in hand through the streets and markets of Damascus, until they came to the vast stables of the wali of that city and saw a host of horses, mules, and kneeling camels being loaded with cushions, bales, chests, and every kind of rich merchandise, while a crowd of slaves and overseers worked and wrangled together in a tumult of noise. "To whom can all these things belong?" asked Al-Makan, and one of the slaves answered: "It is a gift of the wali to King Omar Al-Neman and goes with the annual tribute of the city." On receiving this answer the boy felt his eyes fill with tears and recited these lines:

*If the men I loved aforeside
Turn from me in pique,
If my friends resent my silence
Yet I cannot speak,
Cannot trust the voice of sorrow
For the soul is weak.*

Then he fell silent for a moment; and these words sang in his memory:

*I sat in the sunlight at the tent door,
I sat at the tent door in the morning;
The slim brown back which I adore
Receded in the golden sands' adorning.
Till he was quite gone, to ward off the approaches
Of blinding tears,
I started to prepare the sweet reproaches
I shall not need for years.*

Al-Makan wept and the good fireman said to him: "Be reasonable, dear lad; we have only just managed to bring you back to health and all these tears will make you ill again. I, who am strong, have cause to weep and may weep; but I pray you not to do so." Nevertheless, the youth continued to lament his father and his sister, reciting this admirable poem:

*The earth remains beneath all pondering;
There's hardly time enough to taste its mirth.
Pluck all the flowers of this short wandering
And be the blithe man-errant of the earth.*

The fireman listened to these lines with rapture and tried to learn them by saying them over and over again; while Al-Makan stood apart and brooded upon his lot. At last the elder man said: "Young master, it seems to me that you are always thinking of your native land and your people." "That is so, my father," answered the younger; "I do not think that I can stay an hour longer in this country. I must say farewell now, and join this caravan to go by easy stages to Baghdad." "And I will go with you," answered the fireman. "I have undertaken the work of looking after you and do not wish to turn back before it is finished." Al-Makan called down all the blessings of Allah upon his faithful friend and rejoiced that he should have company upon the road.

The fireman made him mount upon the ass, saying: "Ride as much as you wish and, whenever you are tired of doing so, you can get down and walk." The young man thanked him warmly, saying: "Indeed, no brother has ever done for a brother what you have done for me." They waited for sunset and set off in the cool of the evening with the caravan for Baghdad.

We must now return to Al-Makan's twin sister, the young Nuzhat. She left the khan, as you remember, to find a place as servant with some notable and earn enough money to buy her brother the grill of skewered mutton which he desired. She walked the streets at haphazard, her face covered with the rag of camlet and her heart preoccupied with her brother and the long distance which they both were from their own land. She lifted her thoughts to the pitiful mercy of Allah and said these lines:

*Tell him, O night,
How your black sword has killed my golden days
And your black brush obscured the smooth delight
About my eyes' dim ways.*

*The breasts of my distress
Are pressed against the thorns of appetite,
Desire my food and my drink sleeplessness;
Tell him, O night.*

As young Nuzhat wandered thus in thought about the streets, she met a Bedouin chief walking with five others, who looked long upon her and violently desired her; for her beauty shone out the more because of her rags. He waited until she had come into a narrow and solitary lane and then stopped before her, asking whether she was slave or free. Nuzhat stopped also, saying: "I beg you not to ask me questions which remind me of my grief." "If I question you, my child," answered the Bedouin, "it is because I, who had six daughters, have now one only and she pines for a companion. If you are free I beg you to become a member of my house and help my child to forget her sorrow."

The princess answered in confusion: "O sheikh, I am a stranger and have a sick brother. I accept your

offer if I may return every evening to my brother." "You shall only bear my daughter company during the day," said the Bedouin, "or, if you like, I will adopt your brother also and you need never leave him." These words decided the girl to accompany the Bedouin; who, in fact, was a base rascal who had neither children nor house. Presently he and Nuzhat, with the others, came out beyond the city to a place where the camels were already loaded and the water-skins filled. The Bedouin mounted his camel and, with a quick movement, lifted Nuzhat up beside him; then the troop rode off at full speed.

Poor Nuzhat understood that she had been deceived and carried off; but the tears which she wept for herself and her brother had no effect on the Bedouin, who rode on until dawn; and did not halt until he had reached a place of desolate safety in the desert. Then he said to Nuzhat: "Vile rabbit-hearted city filth, will you stop crying or shall I beat you to death?" The girl's heart revolted at these brutal words and, without caring whether she died for it, she cried: "Robber chief, ill-omened brand of hell, how have you dared to deceive me? What will you do with me?" The traitor raised his whip and bellowed angrily: "I see that you love a whip about your behind, O city filth. Now I swear by my bonnet that if you weep again or are impudent again I will cut out your tongue and thrust it up between your legs." At this horrible menace, Nuzhat, who was not used to such language, trembled and was silent, hiding her face in her veil. Nevertheless, she could not prevent herself from sighing this mournful poem:

*Carry my tears to the place of their begetting,
Carry them home.*

*Ah, for the petting
I had there once!
Yet I would roam;
I was mad there once!
Carry my tears to the place of their begetting,
Carry them home.*

At the sweet rhythm of these lines, the Bedouin, who instinctively loved the sound of words, pitied the fair unfortunate, wiped her tears, and gave her a barley-cake to eat, saying: "Another time, do not try to answer me when I am angry. I cannot stand it! You ask me what I am going to do with you: I do not want you either as concubine or as slave, so I shall sell you to some rich merchant, who will treat you gently and make you happy as I have done." "Be it so," answered Nuzhat. The Bedouin put her on the camel again and rode off towards Damascus while she ate a little of her barley-cake for very hunger.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that they arrived at Damascus and lodged at the sultan's khan near Bab Al-Malik. As Nuzhat was sad and pale and ever wept, the Bedouin said: "If you do not stop crying you will lose your beauty and I will sell you to some hideous old Jew. Think of that, city filth!" He shut her into

one of the rooms of the khan and, hastening to the slave market, offered her for sale to the merchants, saying: "I have brought a young slave from Jerusalem. I was obliged to leave her sick brother to be tended by my family, so that, if any of you wish to see her, let him remember to say that he himself is having her brother looked after at Jerusalem. That will calm her; and, if you consent, I will sell her cheap." One of the merchants asked how old this slave might be, and the Bedouin answered: "She is a virgin just marriageable, full of intelligence, beauty, and manners. Unfortunately since her brother's illness she has become a little worn and thin, but that can soon be remedied by her purchaser." Said the merchant: "I will go and see this slave on condition that, if I do not like her, there is no sale; and that, if she answers your description, I will only pay you the price on which we agree after I have resold her. I intend her for King Omar Al-Neman, lord of Baghdad, whose son, Prince Sharkan, is governor of our city. I will show her to Prince Sharkan and ask for a letter of introduction to his father, whose taste for virgin slaves is well known. Then I will pay you the price."

The Bedouin accepted these conditions; and the two went together to the Sultan's khan and the Bedouin called out: "Nahia, Nahia!" for this was the name which he had given to Nuzhat. The poor girl wept when she heard him and did not answer. Then said the Bedouin to the merchant: "Go in yourself and examine her, but treat her gently because I have accustomed her to such indulgence." The merchant passed into the room and approached Nuzhat, saying: "Peace be with you, my child." She answered in a voice as sweet as sugar and with an exquisite pro-

nunciation of Arabic: "The peace and blessings of Allah be upon you!" The merchant was charmed by her reply and looked at her as closely as he might under her great veil, saying to himself: "What grace and purity of language!" Nuzhat, in her turn, looked at the merchant, and thought: "Here is a kind and venerable old man. Allah grant that I become his slave and leave the repulsive and ferocious Bedouin. I must answer him with intelligence and show him my best manners and my sweetest eloquence." So, when the merchant asked her how she did, she looked modestly upon the ground, and answered with a charming intonation: "Venerable old man, you ask me how I am; I might answer that I am, as you would not wish your greatest enemy to be: but each of us carries his destiny about his neck, said our Prophet, on whom be the prayer and peace of Allah."

The merchant both marvelled and rejoiced at these words, saying to himself: "Now, though I have not seen her face, I am sure that she is very beautiful, and that I may have what I wish for her from Omar Al-Neman." Turning to the Bedouin, he asked: "What is the price of this admirable slave?" Furiously the Bedouin answered: "She is the vilest of creatures! How dare you call her admirable? When she has heard you say that, how will you be able to control her? Depart, depart: I do not wish to sell her!" The merchant understood that the Bedouin was a fool of all fools, so he tried to turn the difficulty by saying: "I will buy this vilest of creatures with all her faults." "How much will you give for her?" asked the other, and the merchant answered: "There is a proverb which says that it is for a father to name his own son. Ask what you consider a fair price." But the Bedouin would not make a price and the merchant

said to himself: "This man is a maggot-head! How can I name a price for so eloquent and charming a damsel? He knows nothing of her worth; she has been blessed by Allah and I doubt not but that she can read and write." He turned to the Bedouin, saying: "I offer you two hundred dinars, free of tax." "Depart, good man," said the Bedouin, "I would not sell the old piece of camlet which she has about her head for two hundred dinars. I have decided not to sell her; I shall take her back to the desert with me to herd my camels and grind corn. Get up, corruption! We are about to start. As for you, sir, I advise you to be gone: otherwise I swear by my bonnet that you will hear things not to your liking."

"This Bedouin, who swears by his bonnet, is quite mad," thought the merchant. "She is worth her weight in jewels. I will buy her out of hand." Then taking the Bedouin persuasively by the mantle, he said: "Have patience, my friend; I can see that you are not used to buying and selling. Both patience and knowledge are required. We shall not disagree about the price; but I must first see her face, for that is the custom." "I do not mind if you do," answered the Bedouin. "Look at her as much as you like; strip her naked and feel her all over." The merchant raised his hands to heaven crying: "Allah protect me from such a misdeed! I only wish to look upon her face."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the merchant advanced towards Nuzhat, excusing himself for the liberty, and sat down by her side in confusion, asking her name in a solicitous voice. She sighed and said: "Do you want to know my present name or the name I used to bear? Once I was called Delight of the Age; but now I call myself the Despite of the Age." The merchant's eyes filled with tears at this answer: so that the girl wept also and plaintively recited these lines:

*I who grow the rose of sorrow
By the pool of tears,
Do not know to what far country
When the dawn appears
You will shape your vagabonding,
Pilgrim of the years.*

The Bedouin found that this conversation was taking too long, so he ran to Nuzhat with raised whip, crying: "Enough chattering! Lift your veil and let him see you." Then Nuzhat looked pitifully at the merchant saying: "For God's sake deliver me from the hands of, this robber, old man, otherwise I will kill myself tonight." So the merchant turned to the Bedouin, saying: "O chief, this young girl is only an embarrassment for you. Name a price for her, and I will buy her." "I repeat," replied the barbarian, "that you must name a price for her, or I will take her back to herd my camels and gather their dung."

"I offer you fifty thousand dinars," said the merchant. "God help us, is that a joke?" asked the Bedouin. "Seventy thousand dinars," said the merchant. "God help us, I have spent more than ninety thousand on barley-cakes for her." "My friend," answered the merchant, "all your family and all your tribe have never eaten a hundred dinars' worth of barley. A hundred thousand is my last word; and if you do not accept it, I will report your treatment of this slave, whom you have most certainly stolen, to Prince Sharkan, the wali of Damascus." "Very well," answered the Bedouin, "I will take a hundred thousand for her, as I have to buy some salt." The merchant laughed and took them both to his own house; where he had the price weighed out carefully, piece by piece, by the public accountant. The Bedouin remounted his camel and set off towards Jerusalem, saying to himself: "If the sister has fetched a hundred thousand dinars, her brother will be worth more. I will look for him." When he reached Jerusalem, he hunted in all the khans for Al-Makan, but, as the boy had already departed with the fireman, his greed went unsatisfied.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE GOOD MERCHANT took Nuzhat to his house, where he dressed her in the richest and finest gar-

ments, and then led her to the market of the goldsmiths and jewellers and bought a great quantity of such jewels as pleased him. These he carried back to his house in a satin scarf and gave them to Nuzhat, saying: "I only ask you for one thing in return: that you do not forget to tell the viceroy the price I paid for you, and to urge him to mention it in the letter of introduction which I hope that he will write for me to King Omar Al-Neman in Bagdad. Also, I wish him to give me a safe conduct and a patent freeing my goods from taxation on their entry into Bagdad."

Nuzhat sighed and her eyes filled with tears, so that the merchant asked her: "Why, my child, do you sigh and weep at every mention of Bagdad? Does someone dear to you abide there; one of your family, one of the merchants? Speak without fear, for I know all the merchants in Bagdad." "As Allah lives," answered the girl, "I know no one there save King Omar Al-Neman himself."

When the merchant heard her answer, he gave a sigh of contentment, as much as to say: "At last my goal is reached." He asked the young girl whether she had already been offered to the king; and she answered: "No; but I was brought up with his daughter in the palace. He used to love me; and anything I ask, he will do; so if you wish a favour from him you have but to give me pen and paper and I will write a letter to Omar Al-Neman. You will take it to him and say that it comes from his humble slave, Nuzhat, who has suffered many misfortunes by day and night and has passed through the hands of many masters. You can add that she stays at present with his viceroy at Bagdad and sends humble greeting." The merchant's respect and affection for Nuzhat in-

creased; and he asked her whether she had not been taught to read the Koran in the palace. "Venerable old man," she answered: "I know the Koran and the Rules of Wisdom; I know medical science and the book of the Introduction to the Mysteries; I know the commentaries on the works of Hippocrates and have myself annotated the books of Galen, the physician; I have read philosophy and logic; I have studied the Simples of Ibn-Baytar and have disputed with sages concerning the canon of Ibn-Saynar; I have studied the unriddling of allegories and can draw all the figures of geometry; I have discoursed with knowledge about architecture; I have learnt anatomy and the Shafi'i books; I have a thorough understanding of syntax and grammar and the history of language, and have attended the society of the most learned in every branch of knowledge; also I am myself the author of many books on eloquence, rhetoric, arithmetic, pure syllogism and spiritual science. And what is more, I have remembered all I ever knew. Give me pen and paper, and I will write a letter in rhythmical verses, so that you can read it again and again, easing your heart in the solitude of the journey from Damascus to Baghdad, and dispense with carrying any books."

The poor merchant was a little overcome at this recital; so exclaiming: "Allah, Allah! Happy the house that shelters her and he who stays with her!" he very respectfully brought out the necessities for writing. Nuzhat took the reed pen, dipped it in the inky oakum, and, trying it first on her nail, wrote this letter:

*This is the letter
Of one in time's fetter,
Spoiled by love's tetter;*

*The lights forget her,
The stars are the sole begetter
Of this letter.*

*This is the verse
Of one whose bad has turned to worse,
Who never had joy to nurse,
Whose prayer came home as a curse;
Sorrowful words and terse,
This is my verse.*

*This is the verse
Of my letter.*

NUZHAT AL-ZAMAN.

She sanded and folded this carefully and then handed it to the merchant, who took it respectfully and, after carrying it to his lips and brow, fastened it in an envelope of satin, saying: "Glory be to Him who moulded you as you are, O marvel of His creatures!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Fifth-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the merchant did not know how to pay enough honour to his guest. He showed her every mark of respect; and ventured to suggest that she might need a bath. She consented

gladly; and he walked before her ceremoniously to the hammam, carrying all that was necessary to dress her wrapped in a piece of velvet. He confided her to the most skilled rubber and, while she was being bathed by this woman, bought many sorts of fruits and sherberts, which he placed beside the couch where she would come to dress.

When the bath was finished, the rubber wrapped Nuzhat in perfumed linen and set her on the couch; they both ate and drank what had been set there and gave the remnants to the old woman who looked after the hammam.

Soon the good merchant arrived with a sandal-wood box, which he opened, crying on the name of Allah. Then he and the rubber began to adorn the young girl for her visit to Prince Sharkan.

First a fine white silk chemise was put on her and a fillet of cloth of gold worth a thousand dinars was wound loosely about her hair. Then she was given a Turkish robe, stitched with gold thread; and red leather boots, perfumed with musk and ornamented with gold tassels and little flowers of pearl and coloured jewels. Pearls worth a thousand dinars each were hung at her ears; a collar of engraved gold passed about her neck; jewelled nets fastened over her breasts; and a belt slung below her navel, consisting of ten rows of alternate amber balls and golden crescents. Each amber ball carried a great ruby, and each crescent nine pearls and ten diamonds. Thus was Nuzhat dressed at the cost of more than a hundred thousand dinars.

The merchant, when he judged her perfect, walked from the hammam with her, leading the way with a respectful air and parting those whom they met to right and left. Those who saw the young girl were at

first stricken dumb by her beauty, and then cried: "Allah, Allah! Glory be to Allah for the work of His hands! Happy the man to whom she shall belong!"

When the merchant came into the presence of King Sharkan, he kissed the earth between his hands, saying: "I have brought you the most marvellous present of all time: a girl who unites in her sole person those charms and gifts and qualities which have made famous women famous." "Let me see," said Sharkan; so the merchant led in Nuzhat by the hand and set her before the prince. Sharkan, who had never seen his little sister, did not of course recognise her. He was ravished by the beauty of her body and was more pleased still when the merchant said: "Beauty is her natural gift; but she has learnt besides all religious and civil knowledge, all political and mathematical science. She will answer any questions which the wisest in the empire put to her."

Prince Sharkan did not take a moment to make up his mind, but said to the merchant: "Tell my treasurer to pay you; and depart in peace." The merchant plucked up courage and said: "Prince of all valour, I had meant this girl for King Omar Al-Neman and only brought her to you to see, that you might write me a letter of introduction to that august monarch. However, as she pleases you she is yours; may I beg in return a patent which will free all my goods from any tax for ever?" "I grant it," said Sharkan. "Also, tell me what you paid for the girl and I will refund the price." "She cost me a hundred thousand dinars, and her trappings a hundred thousand more," answered the other; so Sharkan called his treasurer, and said: "Pay this venerable old man two hundred thousand dinars, and twenty thousand for profit.

Also give him a fair robe of honour from my presses and write him a patent protecting him in my name from all taxation." After this, Sharkan sent for the four kadis of Damascus, and said to them. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHARKAN SAID to the kadis: "I call you all to witness that I free this slave, whom I have bought, and take her to be my wife." The kadis wrote with all speed a bill of franchisement and a marriage contract, sealing both with their seals. Sharkan threw handfuls of gold among those present, and dismissed all save the kadis and the merchant. To the kadis he said: "I wish you to listen to the discourse which I am going to ask this maiden to give us, in proof of her eloquence and this old merchant's claims." He had a great curtain let down in the middle of the hall and placed the young girl behind it, so that she might not be confused in her eloquence by having strange men look upon her.

As soon as the curtain was lowered, all the women of the palace clustered about their new mistress, helping her off with the weightier of her clothes, and kissing her feet and hands in joy and admiration. Also when the wives of the emirs and wazirs heard the news, they obtained leave from their husbands and came to greet Nuzhat and hear the address that she

was about to make to Prince Sharkan and the kadis of Damascus.

Nuzhat rose on the entrance of these great ladies and, kissing them cordially, bade them be seated beside her. She smiled so sweetly upon them and acknowledged their good wishes with so much gentle tact, that they marvelled at her politeness and intelligence, saying among themselves: "They told us that she was a freed slave; but she has more the appearance of being a queen by birth." Then to Nuzhat they said: "Mistress, you have lighted our city with your presence and honoured our land by journeying into it. This kingdom is your kingdom and this palace is your palace and we are your slaves."

She was thanking them in agreeably chosen words, when Sharkan called from the other side of the curtain: "Dear girl, sweet jewel of this age, we are ready to listen to your delightful words, for we have heard that no learning is hidden from you, even the difficult syntax of our language." Nuzhat answered in a voice sweeter than sugar: "Your desire is as a commandment to me. I will proclaim for your satisfaction, my master, those excellent sayings which are upon the *Three Doors of Life*."

THE SAYINGS OF THE THREE DOORS

NUZHAT SAID from behind the curtain:

I speak of the *First Door*: which is the *Art of Conduct*.

The true end of life is the development of enthusiasm; and the chief enthusiasm is the beautiful passion of faith. None can reach enthusiasm who does not live a burning and passionate life, which is equally

possible in the four great ways of mankind: Government, Commerce, Husbandry, and Craftsmanship.

To deal first with Government: those rare beings who are called the rulers of this world must have political knowledge, perfect tact, and a natural gift for what they do. Especially must they never be led aside by their own inclinations, but keep steadfastly in view a policy which has its end in God. If they so rule themselves to this aim, justice shall reign with them and discord shall not share their throne. If, as very often happens, they are led aside by what they wish themselves, they are apt to fall into errors which can never be repaired again. For a ruler must be impartial and a foe to all oppression if he would not be considered by Allah to have neither use nor excuse.

Great Ardeshir, third king of the Persians, one of the Sassanides, said: "Government and faith are twin sisters; faith is a treasure and government the guardian of the treasure."

Our Prophet, upon whom be prayer and peace, said: "Two things are powerful in this world: when they are pure the world goes well; when they are corrupt, the world is corrupt also: these things are Government and Knowledge."

A wise man said: "A king should guard the rights of God and the rights of his people. More especially should he keep peace between the men of the pen and the men of the sword: for when the pen is oppressed the throne falls."

King Ardeshir, who was a conqueror of many lands, divided his empire into four districts and wore four

seal-rings upon his hand, one for each district; so that there might be order among all. This plan was followed until the era of Islam.

The great Kesra of the Persians wrote to his son, who was in charge of one of his armies. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE WROTE to his son: "My child, beware of pity for it weakens government: and beware of a lack of pity, for this stirs up revolt."

An Arab came to the khalifat Abu-Giafar-Abdalla Al-Mansur and said: "Starve your dog if you wish it to follow you." The khalifat was wroth and the Arab continued: "But take care that some passer-by does not hold out a piece of bread to your dog." Al-Mansur understood and profited by this advice, when he had sent the Arab away with a gift.

The khalifat Abd Al-Malik bin Marwan wrote to his brother Abd Al-Aziz, who was in charge of his army in Egypt: "Your counsellors can teach you nothing; but your enemy can teach you how strong your army is."

The excellent khalifat, Omar bin Al-Khattab, took

none into his service until he swore never to ride on a beast of burden, never to take loot from the enemy, never to wear rich clothes, never to be late for prayer. He loved to say: "Intelligence is wealth, quickness of intellect a talisman, and study a glory."

The same Omar, whom Allah keep, said: "There are three kinds of women: the good Mussulman who thinks only of her husband and has eyes only for him; the good Mussulman who looks to obtain only children from marriage; and the harlot who lies as a collar about the neck of the whole world. There are three kinds of men: the wise man who reflects and acts only after reflection; the wiser man who reflects and then takes the advice of others; and the fool who neither reflects nor takes advice."

The sublime Ali bin Abu-Talib, whom Allah keep, said: "Be on your guard against the tricks of women and never take their advice; but do not oppress them, for that will only make them worse. The road away from the house of moderation leads to the town of foolishness. Be just, especially towards slaves."

Nuzhat was continuing with this chapter of her discourse, when she heard the kadis saying behind the curtain: "By Allah, we have never heard such eloquence, but we would like to hear something of the other two doors." So Nuzhat said, with a clever transition:

On some other day I will speak of enthusiasm in the three other ways of mankind, for it is time to turn to the **SECOND DOOR of GOOD MANNERS and THE INTELLECT.**

This door might also be called the door of perfections and, though it is the largest of all, none may enter by it unless he was born with a blessing on his head. I will cite only certain chosen examples.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY the khalifat Mu'awiyah asked the witty club-foot, Aba-Bahr bin Kays, who had begged for an audience, if he had any advice to give him. The club-foot answered: "Prince of Believers, I advise you to keep your head shaved and your moustaches trimmed, to look after your nails, to depilate your armpits, to shave your groin, to clean your teeth, and take care of your gums; but never on a Friday, for that were sacrilege." "Have you any advice to give yourself?" asked the khalifat, and he answered: "My advice to myself is to put one foot forward after another and to keep an eye on both." "How do you behave towards your superiors?" asked the sultan. "I greet them without exaggeration and wait for them to answer my greeting," replied the club-foot. "And how do you behave towards your wife?" was the next question, but Aba-Bahr exclaimed: "Excuse me from answering that question, O Prince of Believers!" "But I insist," said the khalifat, and the club-foot replied: "My wife, like all other women, was created from the last rib, that is to say, from something both weak and

crooked.” “And what do you do when you wish to lie with her?” asked Mu’awiyah. “First, I talk pleasantly to her to put her in good humour,” said Aba-Bahr, “then I kiss her warmly all over to excite her; and, when she has reached that stage which you doubtless know, I lay her on her back and charge her. When the drop of nacre is well incrustated, I cry, ‘Grant, O Lord, that this seed be covered with your blessing and modelled in beauty.’ After that I rise and, taking water in both hands, make my ablutions. At the very last, I thank Allah for the pleasure he has given me.” “I am charmed with your answer,” said the khalifat. “Ask what you will, and I shall grant it.” “Rule justly; that is all I ask,” said the club-foot as he went away. And the khalifat said: “If he were the only wise man in Irak, yet would it be enough.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Nuzhat continued:

In the reign of the khalifat Omar bin Al-Khattab, the venerable Mu’aykib was treasurer. One day Omar’s little son went with his nurse to visit the old man and Mu’aykib gave the child a new silver dirham. Some time afterwards the khalifat called his treasurer

and said: "O peculator, what is this I hear?" "What have I done, Prince of Believers?" exclaimed the honest old man, and Omar answered: "To give a silver dirham to my son was a theft on the whole Mussulman race." Mu'aykib never ceased to exclaim throughout the rest of his life: "Where is there a man so honest as Omar?"

The khalifat Omar was walking one night with Aslam Abu-Zayd when he noticed a fire afar off. He approached it and saw that a poor woman had lighted it beneath a pot. Omar, seeing that two feeble infants were wailing by the side of the woman, asked her what she was doing, and she replied: "My lord, I am warming a little water to give my children who are dying of cold and hunger; but one day Allah will ask the khalifat Omar concerning our misery." "But, my good woman, do you imagine that if Omar knew of your misery that he would not help you?" asked Omar of the woman. "Why should he be khalifat," she answered, "if he does not know of the misery of each of his people?" Omar took Aslam Abu-Zayd with him and returned with all speed to his palace from which he procured a sack of flour and a jar of mutton fat; then he said to Abu-Zayd: "Help me to get them on my back." But Abu-Zayd cried: "I will carry them, O Prince of Believers." "And will you also carry my sins on the Day of Judgment?" asked the khalifat. With that he bore the flour and fat himself to the poor woman and, mixing some of each in the pot, began to cook, blowing the fire himself, so that the wood smoke wavered up through the hairs of his great beard. When the dish was ready he fed the woman and her children until they could eat no more, blowing each morsel himself until it was cool enough to eat. He left the remainder of the flour and the

fat with the woman, and as he was going away, said to Abu-Zayd: "I saw a fire and it enlightened me."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Nuzhat continued:

The same Omar one day passed a slave who was tending his master's flock and stopped to buy a goat from him. But the shepherd answered: "She does not belong to me." So the khalifat said: "Excellent fellow, then I will buy you and free you, for one does not meet an honest man every day."

One day, Hafsa, a kinswoman of Omar, came to him and said: "Prince of Believers, I have heard that your last expedition brought you in a great deal of money, so I have come to claim a little of it through the rights of our kinship." Omar answered: "Allah has made me a guardian over the goods of the Muslims, O Hafsa; all this money belongs to them. I cannot touch any of it to give you pleasure or because I am related to your father, any more than I can touch it for myself."

Nuzhat heard satisfied exclamations from behind

the curtain so she ceased speaking for a moment, and then continued:

Now I will speak of the *third door*: which is the *Door of Virtues*. I will quote certain examples from the lives of the Companions of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace), and of just men among the Mussulmans.

Hassan Al-Basri said: "Every one when he lies dying regrets three things: lost opportunity, unfulfilled hopes, and unrealised ambition."

They asked Suffyan one day whether a rich man could be virtuous. "Yes," he answered, "he can be virtuous on two occasions, when he has lost his money, and when he says to a man who is thanking him for a gift: 'In receiving my gift you have accomplished a perfumed deed towards Allah.'"

When Abdullah bin Shaddad felt the approach of death he sent for his son Muhamad and said to him: "Here are my last instructions: Be pious, be truthful, and thank Allah always, because thanks are apt to bring renewed gifts. Also know, my son, that there is no pleasure in riches but only in piety; for you cannot share your riches with Allah, but you can give him all your piety."

When the pious Abd Al-Aziz became the eighth khalifat of the Ommaides, he called all his rich family about him and made them transfer all their belongings to the public treasure. They went and complained of this to Fatima, daughter of Marwan, who was Omar's aunt and for whom he had a great re-

spect. Fatima entered the presence of the khalifat one night and sat in silence on the carpet. "Speak, my aunt," said the khalifat; but Fatima answered: "Prince of Believers, you are the master, it is for you to speak first. Also nothing is hidden from you, so that you know even the reason of my coming here." The khalifat Omar answered: "Allah sent his Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace) to be balm to his people and a consolation for mankind. The Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace) gathered and took only what he considered necessary, leaving the rest as a river to allay the thirst of his people until the end of the world. It is my business to see that this river is never deflected and never dried up in the desert."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that young Nuzhat, from behind the curtain, continued thus to Prince Sharkan, the four kadis, and the merchant:

Fatima said: "I have understood your words and mine have become useless." Then she returned to the rest of the Ommaides and said: "You do not know how great your fortune is to have Omar bin Abd Al-Aziz as your khalifat."

When that same upright Omar came to die, he called his children to him and said: "The smell of poverty

is sweet unto the Lord." Maslamah bin Abd Al-Malik, who was present, replied: "Prince of Believers, is it right to leave your sons to poverty when you could make them rich; would that not be better than leaving all to your successor?" The khalifat was both angry and surprised upon his deathbed, and answered: "O Maslamah, do you think that I, who have been just in life, will give an example of injustice when I am dying? Once I was at the funeral of one of my predecessors, a son of Marwan, and my eyes both saw and understood, so that I swore an oath never to behave as he had behaved, if I came to be khalifat."

The same Maslamah Al-Malik has said: "One day, when I went to sleep after coming back from the funeral of an old ascetic, there appeared to me the man whom we had just buried, dressed in garments whiter than jasmin, walking in a place of delights, watered by foaming streams, and refreshed by a breeze drunken with its delay among the lemon-trees. He said to me: 'O Maslamah, what would one not do in life for such a reward?' "

He also tells this story: a certain young man during the reign of Omar bin Abd Al-Aziz visited a friend who was a shepherd and saw, in the middle of the flock, what he took to be two great and savage dogs. He asked his friend why he kept them there, and the shepherd answered: "Those are not dogs, they are tame wolves. I am the master of this flock and they do no harm; for when the head is sound the body is sound."

One day the khalifat Omar bin Abd Al-Aziz

preached to the people from a pulpit of mud, saying: "Abd Al-Malik is dead and his fathers are dead and his posterity is not yet born. Also I shall die myself." Maslamah said to him: "Prince of Believers, this pulpit is not worthy of a khalifat. Let me at least put a cushion for you to lean on." "Would you like to see Omar rise on the last day with a cushion chained about his neck?" asked the khalifat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Nuzhat continued:

The same khalifat said one day: "I hope that Allah will not make me immortal; for death is His greatest gift to any true Believer."

Khalid bin Safwan came one day to the khalifat Hisham when he was surrounded by writers and servants in his tent, and said: "Allah prosper you, Prince of Believers, and mingle no drop of bitter in your cup. I will tell you a story which has the merit of being old: There was once a king of old time who said to those about him: 'Has anyone of you seen a king to equal me either in prosperity or generosity?' Then a man who was sanctified by pilgrimage and true learning replied: 'O king, you have asked us a weighty question; before I answer, will you tell me whether

this prosperity of yours is of eternal or of passing things?' 'Of passing things,' answered the king, and the other continued: 'How then can you ask us a weighty question about a thing so light?' 'There is sense in what you say, O man: what then must I do?' asked the khalifat, and the man answered: 'Sanctify yourself.' So the king put by his crown and dressing himself in rags departed upon pilgrimage to the Sacred City, and as for you, O Prince of Allah, what will you do?" Hisham was much moved; and wept till all his beard was wet. Then he re-entered his palace and shut himself in to meditate.

At this moment, the kadis and the merchant cried, from behind the curtain: "By Allah, she is supremely excellent."

Then Nuzhat said: "This Door has many and many an example more, and more sublime than these, which it is impossible for me to tell you in a single discourse, my masters. But Allah will grant us many days and I will be able to teach you everything."

Then Nuzhat fell silent.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the four kadis cried: "Prince of time, this young girl is the marvel of our age and of all ages. We have neither seen for ourselves one like to her nor have we heard tell of her equal." With these words they kissed the

earth between Sharkan's hands and went their way.

Sharkan called all his servants and, at his order, they hastened to make preparations for the marriage and to cook meats and sweets for the festival; while the prince himself graciously retained the wives of the emirs and wazirs who had come to listen to Nuzhat as guests for the ceremony. As soon as evening fell, cloths were laid and served with all that might satisfy the senses and rejoice the eyes. The guests ate and drank till they were satisfied, while far-famed singers sang, and all the slave girls of the palace rejoiced. The hall rang with happiness and the palace was illuminated from the centre to the outskirts, with all the alleys upon its right and the garden upon its left. The emirs and the wazirs came and presented homage and congratulations to Sharkan as soon as he came out from the hammam.

No sooner was the prince seated upon the bridegroom's dais, than the women entered slowly in two ranks, leading the bride, who leant upon the arms of her sponsors. After the seven-fold ceremony of clothing, they led Nuzhat to the marriage-chamber, where they undressed her and would have gone on to the preparation of her body. But they soon saw that preparation was unnecessary for this immaculate mirror, this incensed flesh. So the sponsors told Nuzhat those things which are customary and, putting a thin chemise upon her, left her alone with many good wishes.

When Sharkan came to the couch, he was as ignorant that this beautiful girl was his sister as she was unwitting that she had to do with her brother. He entered into possession of her and their delights were great, so that she conceived straightway and told Sharkan that this was so.

The prince therefore rejoiced in the morning and ordered the physicians to inscribe the happy day of that conception on their rolls. Then he ascended his throne to receive the congratulations of his emirs, his wazirs, and the chiefs of his kingdom.

Lastly he called his private secretary, and dictated a letter to his father, King Omar Al-Neman, saying that he had married a beautiful and learned girl, whom he had bought from a merchant and afterwards freed; that she had conceived by him on the first night; and that it was his intention presently to send her to Baghdad, so that she might see her father-in-law the king, and her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Nuzhat and Al-Makan. Sharkan sent this letter by rapid courier to Baghdad and in eight days the man returned with an answer from the king.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AFTER THE INVOCATION TO ALLAH, King Omar Al-Neman's letter read as follows:

"This is from the desolate Omar Al-Neman, grief-stricken, robbed of his heart and of his children, to the well-loved Sharkan, his son.

"Learn, my child, that living indoors irked me during my grief at your departure, so I went to hunt in the fresh air and lessened my sorrow in this way for a whole month. When I returned to my palace, I heard that your brother, Al-Makan, and your sister, Nuzhat,

had set out with the pilgrims for sacred Mecca, though I had forbidden Al-Makan to go because of his age and had promised to take him myself next year. It seems that they could not wait and so set out secretly, hardly taking sufficient provision for the journey. I have heard no news of them since: the pilgrims returned without them and not one could tell me what had happened to them. I wear mourning and am drowned in tears.

“Do not delay in sending me your news, my son. I send all my wishes for peace on you and yours.”

Some months after receiving this letter, Sharkan, who had previously left his wife in ignorance of its contents because of her pregnancy, resolved to tell her of his father's grief. She had given birth to a girl in the meanwhile so that, when he went to visit her, he first embraced his little daughter. Nuzhat said to him: “The child is seven days old: you must name her today!” Sharkan took the baby in his arms and saw that there hung by a golden chain from her neck one of the three talismanic jewels which had belonged to Abriza, the ill-starred princess of Cesarea.

In his surprise, Sharkan cried out: “Where did you get that jewel, slave?” and Nuzhat, strangled with indignation at the word slave, cried: “I am your mistress and the mistress of all who live in this palace! How dare you call me a slave when I am a queen? I shall keep my secret no longer: I am a king's daughter, I am Nuzhat Al-Zaman, daughter of Omar Al-Neman!”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS SHARKAN understood what she had said, he trembled throughout all his body, his head fell to one side in consternation, the colour drained from his face little by little, and he dropped forward in a swoon. When he recovered he could not believe that he had heard aright, so he said: "Mistress, are you the daughter of Omar Al-Neman?" "I am his daughter," she answered. Then said he: "That jewel is sign that you speak the truth; but I pray you vouchsafe me other signs." Then Nuzhat told her brother all the story of her adventures, which it would be useless to repeat in this place.

Sharkan was convinced and said to himself: "What have I done? How can I have married my own sister? There is only one way of salvation: I must find her another husband; I must marry her to one of my chamberlains, so that if the thing becomes known I can say that I divorced her before I lay with her." Then to Nuzhat he said: "O Nuzhat, know that you are my sister, for I am Sharkan, son of Omar Al-Neman. Allah pardon us!"

Nuzhat uttered a great cry and fell down fainting. She came to herself weeping and lamenting, and beat her cheeks, crying: "We have fallen into great sin! What shall we do? What shall I answer when my father and mother ask me where I got my baby?" Sharkan replied: "The best way to arrange the matter is for you to marry my grand-chamberlain; then our child can be brought up in his house as if it were his own. I will call the good man at once, before our

secret gets noised abroad." With that he began to console his sister, kissing her gently, and she said: "That will be the best way. But in the meanwhile, my brother, how do you wish our little one to be named?" "I will call her Power-of-Destiny," answered Sharkan.

The prince lost no time in marrying Nuzhat to his grand-chamberlain, heaping riches upon him after the ceremony and sending the bride and her child to abide in his house at once. The chamberlain received them and treated his wife with bountiful and loving respect and provided nurses and attendants for the little girl.

All this happened while Al-Makan and the good fireman were getting ready to set out for Baghdad with the Damascus caravan.

Soon after, a second courier arrived from Omar Al-Neman carrying another letter for Prince Sharkan. This letter, after the Invocation, went on as follows:

"This is to tell you, my dear son, that I am still a prey to bitter grief on account of my two children.

"As soon as you receive my letter, send the annual tribute of your province and, with the caravan which carries it, send also your young wife; because I am anxious to see her and to test her knowledge and intelligence. For you must know that there have come to my palace from Constantinople a venerable old woman and five great-breasted virgins. These girls know as much of human learning as any man and no tongue could describe their perfection or the wisdom of their ancient instructress. I have become very fond of them and wish to keep them by me in the palace; for no king on earth has a similar ornament for his throne. I asked their price and the old woman told me that I might have them in exchange for the annual

tribute of your province. And, as God lives, I do not consider that expensive; indeed, any one of the five is worth more than that. I have agreed to buy; and the girls abide with me until the tribute comes. Hasten to send it, my child, for the old woman is in haste to return to her own country.

Above all, do not forget to send me your wife, because her learning will be useful to me in making trial of the girls. I promise you that, if she overcomes them in knowledge and quickness of intellect, I will send you the five girls for yourself and make you a present of the annual tribute of Baghdad.

“Peace be on you and yours, my son.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS he had read his father's letter, Sharkan sent for his brother-in-law the chamberlain, and said to him: “Bring me that young slave whom I gave you in marriage,” and when Nuzhat appeared before him, he gave her the letter and asked her opinion of it. After reading carefully, his sister replied: “Your thought is always well thought and your plan the better plan; but as you ask me, my greatest desire is to see my father and mother in their own country; therefore I beg you to let me depart with my husband and tell my story to our father; how the Bedouin took me and sold me to the merchant, how the merchant sold

me to you, and how you divorced me before lying with me, and married me to your grand-chamberlain." "Be it as you wish," said Sharkan.

The chamberlain, who had no idea that the prince was his brother-in-law, was commanded to set out for Baghdad at the head of the caravan which carried the tribute, and to take his young wife with him. Sharkan had two great camel-litters prepared for him, one for himself and one for his wife, and intrusted a letter to him for Omar Al-Neman. He said good-bye to the pair, and saw them depart; while he himself took his little daughter, Power-of-Destiny, back to the palace and placed her in the charge of nurses and servants, commanding them to see that she kept ever about her neck that magic jewel which had belonged to the unhappy Abriza. Nuzhat, who was quite contented at these cares for her child, mounted, with her husband, upon two costly racing dromedaries and took her place with him at the head of the caravan.

It was on that same night that the fireman and Al-Makan had seen in the course of their walk the camels, mules and torch-bearers moving about the stable of the governor of Damascus and had asked to whom they might belong. When a man answered that this was the tribute of the city of Damascus to King Omar Al-Neman, Al-Makan wished to know who was at the head of the caravan. The man replied: "The grand-chamberlain; the husband of that young slave who is so learned and well-educated." Al-Makan wept at this, remembering his sister and his native country. "Let us leave with this caravan, my brother," said he to the good fireman. "Surely, surely," answered his friend. "I will not let you go alone to Baghdad after bearing you company from Jerusalem to Damascus." "I love and respect you for this, my

brother," said Al-Makan. The fireman saddled the ass and put a bag of food upon it; then he tightened his belt over the skirts of his robe and lifted Al-Makan into the saddle. "Mount behind me," said the youth; but the fireman answered: "Master, I wish to keep myself entirely at your service." "Still," said Al-Makan, "you might get up behind me for an hour to rest yourself." "I will if I get tired," said the other; and Al-Makan exclaimed: "Brother, I am left with nothing to say to you at this hour; but, when we come to my father and mother, I hope that you will see that I am not forgetful."

The caravan set out in the cool of the evening; the fireman going on foot, Al-Makan on the ass, and the grand-chamberlain riding with his wife, at the head of the procession, on blood-dromedaries.

They journeyed forward till dawn and halted, when the heat grew too intense, in the shade of a clump of palm-trees. They rested there and watered their beasts; and then set out again, travelling during the cool of five nights until they came to a certain city where they rested for three days. In this way they went on and on until they came so near Baghdad that men might recognise the breeze which blew from her alone.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN AL-MAKAN felt the well-remembered breeze of his country, he drew in with it a memory of his sister, Nuzhat, and of his father and mother. Thinking of the grief which these last would experience when he returned alone, he wept and recited these lines:

*As this our parting looks to be endlong,
We'll be alert to catch the broken minute;
The breathing space between a song and song
Shall have enough sweet suppliance in it
To throw our hearts together with the threat:
Take me, but do not tell me to forget.*

"My child, you have wept enough," said the fireman. "Besides, remember that we are near the tent of the chamberlain and his wife." "Friend, let me weep and recite poems to soothe the agony about my heart," answered Al-Makan, and with that he turned his face again towards Baghdad, which shone in the moonlight. Nuzhat, who lay within the tent unable to sleep, with tears in her eyes, dreaming sad waking dreams of the absent, heard a voice near her passionately chanting these lines:

*The star of joy shone gold above,
But he has fallen and night lies the thicker;
The cup is broken, and my love
Thirsts all the more for having tried that liquor.*

At the conclusion of his song Al-Makan fell down in a dead faint.

When Nuzhat, wife of the chamberlain, heard this song ringing through the night, she rose and called the eunuch who slept at the door of the tent. He came to her, and she said: "Run out quickly to find the man who was singing and bring him to me." "I heard nothing," said the eunuch. "The night is dark, and I can find no one without waking up all our people." "Nevertheless it must be done," said Nuzhat. "If you find anyone awake, you may be sure it was he who sang."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE EUNUCH dared not make any further objection; so he went out and, looking all about him, found that the only man who seemed to be awake was the fireman, since Al-Makan still lay in a swoon. The fireman, seeing by the light of the moon that the eunuch was in a very bad temper, feared that the singing had disturbed the chamberlain's wife; so that, when the eunuch asked him if he had been singing, he answered: "No, no, certainly not." Then said the eunuch: "But who was it? Show him to me, for you were awake and must have seen him." More terrified than ever for Al-Makan's sake, the fireman insisted that he had seen and heard nothing. "You lie!" said the eunuch.

“Never will I believe that you heard nothing.” “But it is true!” cried the fireman. “It was some desert wanderer on a camel who was singing and it was his ill-omened voice which wakened me, Allah curse the same!” The eunuch shook an unbelieving head, and returned grumbling to report to his mistress that the song had been sung by a wanderer who was now far away on his camel. Nuzhat looked at the eunuch in her disappointment and said nothing.

Soon after this, Al-Makan came to himself and saw the moon shining in the clear bowl of the sky above his head. The magic zephyr of memory lifted in his soul; and there sang in his heart innumerable birds and the modulation of invisible flutes. The desire came irresistibly upon him to deliver his sorrows in song, and he said to the fireman: “Listen, and I will recite certain beautiful verses to calm my heart.” Then said the fireman: “Do you not know what has happened? Do you not know that I only saved you from the eunuch by the ingratiating of my manners?” “What eunuch?” asked Al-Makan. “Master,” returned the fireman, “the eunuch of the chamberlain’s wife came here, scowling and brandishing a great stick of almond-wood. He examined all the sleepers and, finding that only I was awake, asked me, rudely enough, whether I had been singing. I answered that it was some wanderer passing by on the road and, although the eunuch did not seem to believe me, he went away, commanding me to seize anyone I heard singing so that he might take the culprit to his mistress. You can see, dear master, that I had considerable difficulty in allaying the suspicions of this black fellow.”

Al-Makan cried: “What man dare stop me singing the songs which please me? I shall sing all the verses that I love, let what will come of it. What have I to

fear now that I am so near my own country, where nothing can touch me?" "You want to destroy us all!" cried the poor fireman. "I am sorry, my friend, but I must sing," replied Al-Makan firmly. "Then you will drive me away," said the fireman, "for I would rather leave you than see you come to harm. Have you forgotten, my child, that we have been together for a year and a half and you have never had to reproach me? You must understand that every one is very tired and wishes to sleep. I know that your verses are beautiful; but do not keep us all awake with them." Nevertheless, Al-Makan was quite unable to restrain himself and, as a little breeze ruffled the tufts of the palms above him, he sang at the top of his voice:

*Time, where are the old hours in whose gold mirth
I lay with love upon adored earth?*

*Time has put by the coloured days of laughter
And all the smiling nights which followed after.*

*Time has gnawed thin the pillow of my rest.
Who evilly worked where I had loved the best?
Time!*

With the last word of this, he uttered three great cries and fell into a swoon again, so that the fireman rose and covered him with his mantle.

Nuzhat this time recognised the voice of her brother without any doubt, and called to the eunuch through her sobs: "Unhappy wretch! the same man has sung a second time quite near my tent. As Allah lives, if you do not bring him to me at once, my husband will give you a good beating and dismiss you from his serv-

ice. Take these hundred dinars and give them to the singer, politely inviting him to come to me; if he refuses, give him this purse of a thousand dinars; if he refuses again, do not insist further; but find out where he lodges, what he is doing, and from what country he has come. Above all, make haste!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE EUNUCH went out on his search, stumbling among the legs of the sleeping and looking into the faces of each; but he could find no one awake. So he went up to the fireman, who was sitting without his mantle and with his head uncovered, and seized him by the arm, crying: "It was you who sang!" "As Allah lives, it was not I, O chief of the eunuchs!" answered the terrified man. "Very well," said the eunuch. "I will not leave go of you until you point out who it was; because I dare not go back to my mistress without him." The unfortunate fireman began to cry out in his fear for Al-Makan, and said to the eunuch: "I swear by God that it was someone passing along the road and singing. If you harm me you will have to answer for it at Allah's judgment. I am only a poor man, but I come from the city of Abraham, who was the Friend of God." "That may be so," said the eunuch, "but you had better come and tell your story to my mistress, for she will never be-

lieve me." Then said the fireman: "Sublime and admirable servant, it were better for you to go back to the tent; and, if the voice is heard again, you can hold me personally responsible and treat me as the guilty party." Then to calm the eunuch and persuade him to his advice, he overwhelmed him with sweet compliments and kissed him upon the forehead.

At last the eunuch pretended to be convinced; but, instead of returning to his mistress, whom he dared not face, he walked round the tents and, coming back silently, hid himself in the shadow not far from the fireman.

As soon as Al-Makan woke from his swoon, the fireman said: "Rise up and listen to what has happened because of your singing." And he told the youth the whole story; but Al-Makan answered: "I do not wish to understand anything; I can in no wise hold my sensations within me, now that we are so near my native land." Then said the fireman in horror: "My child, do not listen to these suggestions from the evil one! How can you be so bold, when I have enough fear for both of us? I conjure you by Allah not to sing again until we have actually reached your native land. Really, my son, I did not know that you were as mad as all this. The chamberlain's wife wants to have you beaten because you have robbed her of her rest. She has already sent her eunuch to look for you twice."

Al-Makan paid no attention to the fireman's words; but lifted his voice a third time and sang with all his soul:

Enough, I cannot live without my sleep,

Destroy my heart outright, or you will rue it.

Friends said: "Ah, love has got you in his deep."

I answered: "Do you think that love could do it?"

Hardly had he finished his song when the eunuch appeared before him; this terrified the fireman to such an extent that he ran away and stopped far off to see what might happen.

The eunuch advanced very respectfully towards Al-Makan, saying: "Peace be with you!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Al-Makan answered: "And with you the peace, the mercy, and the blessing of Allah!" "Master," said the slave, "this is the third time that my mistress has sent me to say that she wishes to see you." "Your mistress!" cried Al-Makan. "What bitch is that who dares to send for me? A curse of Allah be upon her and upon her husband!" Not content with this beginning, he cursed the eunuch for a whole minute and the other dared not answer because of his mistress's instructions. Rather he tried with sweet and oily words to win the youth over, saying among the rest: "My boy, this invitation was not meant to offend or disturb you, but simply that you should bend your generous steps towards the ardent desires of a lady who knows very well how to repay complacency."

At last Al-Makan allowed himself to be persuaded to accompany the eunuch to the tent. When the fireman saw this, he trembled for the youth and followed

afar off, thinking: "That he should die so young! Surely he will be hung at dawn." Then another thought came to him, and he said: "Suppose he puts the blame on me and says that I was singing! That would be very wicked of him."

Al-Makan and the eunuch moved with difficulty among sleeping men and animals, and came at last to the door of Nuzhat's tent. Here the eunuch begged Al-Makan to wait for him and entered alone, saying to his mistress: "I have brought the man; he is both young and handsome, and seems to be of noble birth." Nuzhat felt her heart beat violently at these tidings and said to the eunuch: "Make him sit down near the tent and beg him to sing something more that I may hear it near. Afterwards ask his name and country of him." The eunuch went out and said to Al-Makan: "My mistress begs you to sing again and wishes to know your name and country." "With willing heart and as in duty bound," answered Al-Makan, "but my name has been blotted out from among men, just as my heart has been blackened. My tale is worthy to be written with needles in the corner of an eye; for I am as one who has become drunken with over-long sitting at the wine, a sleep-walker, a drowned man floating on a sea of folly."

Nuzhat heard what he said from inside the tent and, weeping, commanded the eunuch to ask the youth whether he had lost someone dear to him: a mother or a father or a brother. The eunuch did so; and Al-Makan answered: "Alas, I have lost all these; and also a sister who loved me. I know not where she is, for Fate has separated us." The eunuch bore back this answer, and Nuzhat said: "God grant that he find consolation in his grief and a reunion with those he loves."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Nuzhat said to the eunuch: "Go to him and beg him to sing some verses concerning the bitterness of separation." The eunuch carried this petition to Al-Makan, who was sitting near the tent, resting his cheek upon his hand. In the strong moonlight which bathed the sleeping encampment, Al-Makan's voice mingled sweetly with the silence:

*My song
Of coloured music
Overlaid with gold
Has chanted and extolled
The power of bitterness
A thought too long.*

*My themes are these,
If so you please:*

*Dark-glancing deer that tread a garden of roses,
Where bees bring honey and the dawn weeps her dew
To fashion breasts like summer-dreaming pears.
The wind stirs in the branches of the women
Pure as unthreaded pearls;
I smell the flower-essences upon them
To sunset flutes*

*And wine drunk out on the narcissus lawns.
Water of red lips to be drunk
Beside garden streams:*

These are my themes.

*My song
Of coloured music
Overlaid with gold
Has chanted and extolled
The power of bitterness
A thought too long.*

Nuzhat listened to this excellent poem in ravished silence; but, when it was finished, she feverishly lifted the door of the tent and leaning out looked at the singer in the light of the moon. Then indeed with a great cry she recognised her brother, and leapt towards him, stretching out her arms, and calling: "Al-Makan, Al-Makan!"

Al-Makan recognised his sister; they cast themselves into each other's arms and both sank down fainting.

Speechless and astonished, the eunuch hastened to fetch a great coverlet from the tent and stretched it respectfully above them so that they might be hidden from any who chanced to pass. Then he waited, as in a dream, until they should come to themselves.

Soon Nuzhat recovered and, a moment or so afterwards, Al-Makan did the same. The young girl forgot all her past misfortunes in her present joy, and recited these lines:

*In spite of my deserts
Fate would have quite undone us;
But I tricked Destiny.*

*My lover is with me
And Fate tucks up his skirts
To wait upon us.*

Hearing her words, Al-Makan clasped his sister to his breast and said, with tears of joy flowing from his eyes:

*My eyes have caught the trick, I fear,
Of using tears for all they wish to say;
They wept with bitter sorrow for a year
And weep with joy today.*

Nuzhat asked her brother to come into the tent and to tell her his whole story before she should tell him hers, but Al-Makan said: "Tell me yours first, dear sister." So Nuzhat told her brother all that had happened to her, with details which it would be useless to repeat here, adding: "I will presently make you known to my husband, the chamberlain. I am sure you will be friends, for he is an excellent man in every way. Now tell me all that has happened to you since the day I left you sick in the khan at Jerusalem." Al-Makan then told the whole of his story and finished by saying: "Above everything, dear sister, I shall never find words to tell you of all that excellent fireman of the hammam did for me: he spent his money on making me well, he served me night and day with more zeal than a brother might show a brother, or a lover a lover, went hungry that I might eat, and walked while I rode upon his ass. If I am alive now, it is due to him." Then said Nuzhat: "If Allah wills, we will find a fitting recompense for him when the days of our power come again."

Nuzhat called the eunuch, who ran in and kissed

Al-Makan's hands, standing respectfully before him; the young girl saying: "Servant, whose face is of good augury, keep the purse with a thousand dinars in it, as you were the first to bring me the news. Now hasten to inform your master that I wish to see him." The eunuch ran rejoicing to fetch the chamberlain; who came quickly, and was thunderstruck to find a strange young man in his wife's tent at midnight. Nuzhat reassured him by telling him the whole story, and added: "So you see, O venerable chamberlain, that, instead of a slave-girl, you have married the daughter of King Omar Al-Neman. This is my brother, Al-Makan."

When the chamberlain heard the story, the truth of which he could not doubt, he rejoiced exceedingly to know that he had become the son-in-law of King Omar, and said to himself: "Surely I shall be made the governor of some great province." He tendered many respectful congratulations to Al-Makan on his delivery from tribulation and his meeting with his sister. He was about to order his slaves to pitch a second tent for the new arrival, when Nuzhat said: "That is not necessary since we are so near Baghdad. My brother and I will be only too pleased to live in the same tent, as we have not looked upon each other for so long." "Be it as you wish," answered the chamberlain; and he left them alone together, taking care to send them torches, syrups, fruits, sweetmeats and hams from a store which he had brought from Damascus to distribute to those who should come out from Baghdad to welcome him. He provided Al-Makan with three sumptuous changes of raiment and a blood-dromedary with many coloured trappings. When he could think of no more to give the young man, he walked up and down outside his tent, puffing

his breast with complacency and thinking of his good fortune, his present importance, and his future greatness.

When morning had well come, he hastened to the tent and saluted his brother-in-law. Nuzhat said to him: "We must not forget the fireman; I pray you tell the eunuch to saddle a fine horse for him and serve him two good meals a day. Let him by no means go far from us."

The chamberlain gave these orders to the eunuch, who took some of the men of his master's following and set out with them to look for the fireman. They found him at last at the tail of the caravan, saddling his ass with trembling hands, that he might escape from that place which had been so fatal to his young friend. Seeing the eunuch and the slaves suddenly all about him, he was like to die. His cheeks turned yellow and his knees knocked together, for he did not doubt that Al-Makan had informed on him to the chamberlain's wife to get himself out of a difficulty.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the eunuch cried to the terrified fireman: "O liar, why did you say that you did not know who had sung? We have learnt that the singer was your close companion. I shall not leave you for a single moment till we reach

another time. The present situation calls for immediate attention:

“When the king passed to the mercy and limitless kindness of Allah, the people rose up to know who should be elected in his stead, and would have come to blows, had it not been for the intervention of the nobles and the highest in the kingdom. At last it was agreed to abide by the decision of the four great kadis of Baghdad. These consulted together and named Prince Sharkan, governor of Damascus, king in his father’s place. When I was told of this I put myself at the head of the army to carry the news to Prince Sharkan at Damascus.

“But I must tell you, venerable chamberlain, that there is also a party in Baghdad which favours the election of young Al-Makan; only no one knows what has become of him or his sister for this long while, seeing that it is five years since they departed on pilgrimage and passed beyond the knowledge of men.”

Hearing these words of the wazir Dandan, the chamberlain though he was naturally grieved at the death of King Omar, rejoiced exceedingly to think what an excellent chance Al-Makan had of becoming king of Baghdad.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the chamberlain turned towards Dandan saying: “It is a strange

tale that you tell me; but confidence for confidence, I think that I have a stranger one, which will rejoice your heart and put your worries away from you. Allah has made our road easy for us by giving back the prince Al-Makan and Nuzhat, his sister."

Dandan's joy knew no bounds when he heard this news and he cried: "Hasten to tell me the details of this happy chance, O venerable chamberlain." Nuzhat's husband told him the whole story of the brother and sister, and by no means omitted the fact that he himself had become the brother-in-law of the young prince.

At this last intelligence, Dandan bowed before the chamberlain and presented him with such homage as is due towards an equal. Then he called together all the emirs and captains of the army and chiefs of the kingdom, as many as there were with him, and made known to them the new situation. At once they kissed the earth between the chamberlain's hands, and rejoiced at the new order, giving praise to the God of Destiny for the diversity of his marvels.

Later in the day the chamberlain and the wazir Dandan sat each on a raised chair and took counsel with the emirs and the wazirs. After an hour's discussion it was unanimously decided to elect Al-Makan to the throne of King Omar instead of going on to Damascus to bring back Prince Sharkan. At this decision, Dandan rose from his seat as a sign of respect to the chamberlain, who had now become the most important person present; and both he and the wazirs and the emirs gave the old man magnificent presents that he might look upon them favourably. Dandan said to him in the name of all: "O venerable chamberlain, we hope that, through your magnanimity, each may keep, under the new king, the place which he now

holds. Now we will hasten to Baghdad to make suitable preparation for our young king, while you yourself return and inform him of his election." The chamberlain promised his protection and that all should keep their present employments, and then left them to return to the tents of Al-Makan, while Dandan and the army set off towards Baghdad. Before he left, however, he took care to receive from Dandan men, camels, sumptuous tents, and all sorts of royal ornaments and robes.

As he returned to the brother and sister, the chamberlain felt himself ever better disposed towards Nuzhat than he had been before. He said to himself: "A blessed and a prosperous journey!" and when he arrived would not go into his wife's tent without first soliciting an audience, which was immediately granted.

He entered ceremoniously and told all that he had heard of the death of King Omar and the election of Al-Makan, adding: "It now only remains for you, generous king, to accept the throne without hesitation; seeing that, if you refuse, harm may come to you from the one elected in your place."

Though he and his sister were both in tears at the death of their father, Al-Makan answered: "I accept the decree of Destiny, since no one can escape his fate; your words are full of counsel and good sense. Tell me, venerable brother-in-law, how shall I conduct myself towards my brother Sharkan?" "The only just solution of the difficulty," answered the chamberlain, "is that you should divide the empire between you, you becoming sultan of Baghdad, and your brother sultan of Damascus. If you determine on this and follow your determination closely, peace will result." And this advice seemed good to Al-Makan.

After he had finished speaking, the chamberlain put

upon Al-Makan the royal robe which he had received from Dandan and, giving him the great gold sword of kingship, withdrew. Once outside the royal presence, he chose a piece of rising ground on which he had the royal tent pitched and prepared, with a high cupola and a double inside veil of coloured silks, wrought with pictures of trees and flowers. He ordered the carpet-bearers to spread great carpets upon the earth after it had been well beaten and watered, and then hastened to beg the king to pass that night within the tent.

The king did so; and hardly had dawn appeared when a far noise of war-drums and clarions made itself heard from out a column of dust raised by the army of Baghdad, at the head of which the wazir Dandan was marching to receive his king, after having made all necessary preparations in the city.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KING AL-MAKAN mounted upon a throne raised in the middle of the tent, dressed in his royal robes. He held the great sword of rule resting on his knees between his two hands; and sat motionless while the mamelukes of Damascus and the guards of the chamberlain ringed him with naked swords.

Then, under the direction of the chamberlain, a procession of homage began. By a corridor of silk, the chiefs of the army were led into the royal presence

ten by ten, beginning at the lowest grade in the manner of old time; and ten by ten swore fealty to the king and kissed the earth between his hands in silence. At last there remained only the four kadis and the wazir Dandan; the kadis entered as the others had done and, taking their oath, passed out in silence; but, when Dandan entered, Al-Makan rose from the throne to do him honour, and went to meet him, saying: "Welcome, dear father of us all; welcome, worthy wazir, whose every act is perfumed with a great wisdom, whose every plan is confected by cunning and secret hands." So Dandan took the oath upon the Book and the Faith and kissed the earth between the king's hands.

While the chamberlain was giving orders for the feast, for the choicest meats and a pleasing service of songs, the king said to his wazir: "We must give great largess to the soldiers and all their officers, to mark my coming to the throne; therefore I decree that the whole of the tribute which we carry from the town of Damascus shall be divided among them. Also they must eat and drink until they can eat and drink no more. When these things have been attended to, I desire you to tell me the cause and coming of my father's death in fullest detail." Dandan carried out the king's orders and, further, gave three days' leave to the soldiers and informed the notables that, for the same period, they were excused attendance on the king. Leaving the whole army crying down good fortune on Al-Makan's reign, Dandan returned towards the royal tent. While his wazir was away, Al-Makan had said to his sister: "My dear, you have heard of the death of our father, but not the manner of it. Stay with me and you shall hear what report the wazir Dandan makes of it." With that he installed Nuzhat under

the dome of the tent and had a great silk curtain lowered between her and the throne.

When Dandan entered he said to him: "O wazir, tell me now all that you know concerning the death of that most sublime among kings," and the wazir Dandan said:

THE TALE OF THE DEATH OF KING OMAR AL-NEMAN AND THE ADMIRABLE DISCOURSES WHICH WENT BEFORE IT

ONE DAY when King Omar Al-Neman felt himself oppressed by sorrow at your disappearance and had called all of us round him that we might attempt to distract him with our conversation, we saw a venerable old woman enter the presence, bearing all the marks of a saintly life upon her countenance. With her were five young virgin girls, round-breasted and as beautiful as moonlight, shining with such natural perfection that no tongue may do justice to their charms. Each had, in excess of her miraculous beauty, an astonishing knowledge of the Koran, the books of science, and the words of all Mussulman sages. The holy old lady kissed the earth between the king's hands, saying: "I bring five jewels to you such as the court of no other king upon the earth has seen. I pray you to look upon their beauty and put them to the proof; for beauty is never apparent save to the search of love."

King Omar was charmed by the old woman's words and conceived a great respect for her appearance. Moreover, the five young girls pleased him infinitely, and he said to them. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that King Omar said to the young girls: "Sweet children, if it is true that you are so filled with the knowledge of the delicious deeds of history, let each one of you come forward in turn and make some little discourse to sweeten my ears."

Then the first girl advanced with an air of charming modesty and kissed the earth between the king's hands, saying:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE FIRST GIRL

O KING OF TIME, life lives only by the will to live, planted in man that he may become master of himself and, with Allah's help, draw nearer to Allah. Life was given to man that he should increase in beauty and tread all error under his feet. Kings, who are the first of men, should be also the first in virtue and disinterestedness. A wise and cultivated man should act gently and judge suavely in all things, especially those connected with his friends. He should guard himself carefully from his enemies, but choose his friends with greater care; and once they are chosen, he should never allow another to come between himself and them, but rather decide all matters between them with forbearance. For if he has chosen his friends among those who care not for the things of this world, he should listen to their judgment; and if from among those who are attached to the things of this world, he

should be the more careful not to harm their interests, gainsay their habits, or contradict their words. For contradiction may alienate the love of a father or a mother, and yet is it a thing of no worth; while a friend has a value which is above price. A friend is not like a wife, who can be divorced and replaced; a wound between friends is never healed. A poet has said:

*You must be careful of a lover's heart,
Alas, alas,
It breaks more easily
Than the fine glass
Which drinkers set apart
To crown their ecstasy.*

Let me recall certain words of the sages. A kadi who would judge justly should look upon both sides of a fact and make no difference between rich and poor. His duty is to reconcile the two parties if possible, so that peace may reign among the Faithful. When there is a doubt, he should make long reflection and come up to the affair from many sides; then, if the doubt remains, he should reserve judgment. Justice is the first duty of man. It is better for a man who has been unjust to turn towards justice, even than for a just man to remain in that way. Let it be remembered that God has placed judges upon the earth to judge appearances; but He Himself will judge the hidden things. A judge should never try to extract a confession by torture or starvation, for that is unworthy of the Faithful. Al-Zahri said: "Three things make a judge useless: respect of place, love of praise, and fear of losing his appointment." A judge one day asked the khalifat Omar why he had deprived him

of his situation; and the king answered: "Because your words exceed your deeds." Alexander the Great one day brought together his judge, his cook, and his chief scribe. To the judge he said: "I have confided to you the highest and heaviest of my kingly duties. See that your soul be kingly." To his cook he said: "My body is in your care; so let your art be without violence." To his scribe he said: "The children of my mind are in your care, O brother of the pen; see then that they suffer no defacement throughout the ages."

When the girl had finished speaking, she covered her face again with her veil and rejoined her companions.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eightieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR Dandan continued in this fashion:

The second girl, who had bold glancing eyes and a laughing chin, kissed the earth seven times between the hands of your late father, and said:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE SECOND GIRL

Auspicious king, Lukman the Wise said to his sons: "There are three things which are possible only under

three conditions: you may not know if a man be really good until you have seen him in his anger; you may not know if a man be brave until you have seen him in battle; and you may not know if a man be a friend until you have come to him in necessity." A tyrant will pay for his injustice, in spite of the flattering words of his courtiers; and the oppressed will escape perdition, in spite of all injustice. Deal with people according to their deeds and not according to their words. Yet deeds are not worth the intentions which inspire them; so that each man shall be judged according to his intentions and not according to his deeds. The heart is the noblest member of the body. A wise man said that the worst of men is he who allows an evil desire to take root in his heart; for he shall lose his manhood. A poet said:

*The wise will keep
His treasure hid apart;
True gold is hidden in the heart,
A miner never had to dig so deep.*

Our Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace) said: "The true wisdom is to prefer immortal things." It is related that the ascetic Sabit wept so much that his eyes became weak. A doctor, who was called, said: "I can only cure you on one condition." "What condition is that?" asked Sabit. "That you cease to weep," answered the doctor. "But of what use would my eyes be, if I did not weep?" said Sabit.

A disinterested action is the most beautiful thing in the world. There were two brothers in Israel; one asked the other: "What is the most terrible thing that you have ever done?" His brother answered: "One day as I was passing a poultry run, I seized a

fowl, wrung its neck, and threw it back again. That is the most terrible thing that I have ever done. And you?" The first replied: "I once prayed to God for something."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the second girl continued thus:

A poet has excellently well said:

*There are two beings you may not offend:
God and a friend.*

With these words the second girl retired. A third, who united in herself the perfections of the other two, took her stand before Omar Al-Neman, and said:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE THIRD GIRL

Auspicious king, I will only speak briefly today, because I am a little unwell and because the sages have recommended brevity.

Sufyan said: "If the soul had her habitation in the heart of man, man would be winged and might fly lightly to Paradise."

Sufyan said again: "To look upon the face of one

who has been afflicted with ugliness is a supreme crime against the spirit."

After these two admirable phrases, the girl retired; and a fourth advanced with the balancing of sublime hips, and said:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE FOURTH GIRL

Auspicious king, I shall relate certain incidents from the lives of just men. Bishr the Barefoot said: "Beware of the abominable thing." Those who were about him asked what that might be, and he answered: "To make long prayers; for that is the ostentation of piety." Then one who was with him besought him to teach the hidden truth and the mysteries of existence. The Barefoot answered: "My son, these things are not for the herd; therefore we may not give them to the herd. Were there a hundred just men, yet only five of those would be as pure as refined silver."

The sheikh Ibrahim tells this tale: "I chanced one day upon a poor man who had lost a little copper coin; so I offered him a silver dirham. He refused me, saying: 'What would I do with all this silver, whose expectations are centred upon a felicity which shall endure for ever.'"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BISHR THE BAREFOOT'S sister came one day to the imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, and said: "Make a thing plain to me, O holy imam of the Faith. It is my custom to sit upon our terrace at night and spin thread by the light of the torches which pass in the street, for we have no lamp in our house. Tell me, if it is lawful so to use light which does not belong to me?" "Who are you, O woman?" questioned the imam; and she replied: "I am the sister of Bishr the Barefoot." Then the imam rose and kissed the earth between the girl's hands, saying: "Most sweetly perfumed soul and sister of the saints, might I but respire the purity of your heart all my life long!"

A certain sage said: "When Allah wishes well to one of His creatures, He opens for him the door of inspiration."

It is related that when Malik bin Dinar used to see anything which he liked as he wandered through the markets, he would reprove himself saying: "It is no good, my soul! I shall not listen to you." He loved to repeat this phrase: "The one way by which you can save your soul is by not obeying her; if you would lose her, listen to her."

Mansur bin Omar tells the following tale: "I once passed through the city of Cufa on a dark night, while I was making pilgrimage to Mecca. Near me in the bosom of the darkness I heard a loud voice saying this prayer: 'Great Master and Lord, I am not of those who revolt against your laws and are ignorant of your kindness. Though I have sinned greatly, I ask

for pardon and remission; seeing that my intentions did not sin but only my acts.' As soon as this prayer was finished, I heard a heavy fall. As I could make nothing of the voice or the sound which followed it, I called out: 'I am Mansur bin Omar, a pilgrim bound for Mecca. Is there need of help?' No one answered me, so I went my way. Next morning I saw a funeral procession passing among whom walked an old and sorrowful woman. I asked her who the dead might be, and she replied: 'Yesterday my son, after saying his prayers, recited that verse from the Book which begins with the words: O you who believe in the word, lift up your hearts. No sooner had my son read this verse than a man who was passing broke his heart and fell dead. That is all that I can tell you of this death.' "

The fourth girl here retired; and the fifth, who was, as it were, a crown about the heads of the other four, advanced and said:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE FIFTH GIRL

O auspicious king, I will speak to you a little of the things of the spirit as revealed in history.

Moslîma bin Dinar said: "Each pleasure that does not forward the soul a little nearer God is not so much a pleasure as a calamity."

It is related that while Moses (peace be with him!) sat by the waters of Midian, two maidens drew near to water the flock of their father Shu'ayb. Moses (peace be with him!) drew water for the sisters to drink, and poured also for their flock into the hollow palm-tree trough. When the girls returned to their father's house and told him of this, he bade one of them return and bring the stranger to him. She went

back to the well and covering her face, said to Moses: "My father begs you to accompany me to his house to share our repast, in return for the kindness you did us." Moses at first did not wish to go with her on account of such a trifling matter; but at last he was persuaded and set out behind her.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the fifth girl continued thus:

Now this girl had a very big bottom; sometimes the wind moulded her light robe to it, sometimes it lifted the robe altogether and showed the naked prominence. Each time it appeared, Moses shut his eyes; and at last, fearing that the temptation to open them would become too great, insisted on walking in front of the girl. When Shu'ayb saw Moses enter, he rose and said to him: "Dinner is ready, Moses; be very welcome for the kindness which you did to my daughters." "My father," replied Moses, "I do not sell my good deeds upon this earth for gold, silver, or food; I store them up towards the Day of Judgment." Then said Shu'ayb: "Young man, you are my guest and we have a tradition of hospitality; therefore sit down and eat with us." Moses did so; and, at the end of the meal, Shu'ayb said to him: "If you wish, you may stay with us and feed our flocks; at the end of eight

years I will marry you to my daughter who went back to the well to fetch you." Moses joyfully accepted this offer, saying to himself: "Now that the matter has been put upon a lawful footing, I can think upon that bountiful bottom without sin."

Ibn-Bitar met a friend who asked him why he had not seen him for a long time, and he answered: "I have been spending the time with my friend Ibn-Shihab. Do you know him?" "Indeed, I know him," answered the other, "he has been my neighbour for over thirty years and I have never spoken a word to him." "My poor friend," said Ibn-Bitar, "do you not know that he who does not love his neighbour is not loved by God? Do you not know that a neighbour owes as much to a neighbour as to a brother?"

One day Ibn-Adham said to a friend, who was returning with him from Mecca: "How do you live?" "When I have something to eat, I eat; when I have nothing, I wait in patience," his friend answered. Then Ibn-Adham said: "The dogs of Balkh do very much the same. When Allah gives me bread, I glorify Him; and when He denies me, I thank Him." The other cried out: "O my master!" and said no more.

Muhamad bin Omar one day asked a man of austere life his view on our grounds of faith in Allah. The man answered: "I repose my trust in Him for two reasons: I have found by experience that the bread I eat is not eaten by another; and I know that I could not have been born into this world if Someone had not willed it."

The fifth girl rejoined her companions; and the saintly old woman advanced with slow and holy steps. She kissed the earth nine times between the hands of your late father, King Omar Al-Neman, and said:

THE DISCOURSE OF THE OLD WOMAN

O king, you have heard from my five charges edifying discourse concerning the despoise of mundane things. I will speak to you about certain acts of the greatest in times past.

The imam Al-Shafi (whom Allah keep!) divided the night into three parts: the first for study, the second for sleep, and the third for prayer. Towards the end of his life, he waked all night and kept none of it for sleep.

The same imam Al-Shafi said: "During ten years of my life, I have never eaten as much barley-bread as I wanted. To eat too much hurts everything. It thickens the brain, hardens the heart, destroys the intellect, brings on sleep and laziness, and sucks away all energy."

Young Ibn-Fuyad tells the following story: "One day in Baghdad I sought the bank of the river to perform my ablutions. While I was stooping down, a man, followed by a silent crowd, passed behind me and said: 'Be diligent in your ablutions, young man, and Allah will be diligent about you.' I turned and, seeing a man with a great beard whose face was stamped with benediction, hastened to finish my ablutions and to follow him. When he saw me, he turned and said: 'Do you wish to ask me anything?' 'Venerable father,' I answered, 'teach me, I pray, how one may take certain hold on Allah.' This was his answer: 'Learn to know yourself; when you know yourself, do anything and everything you wish, so that it does not interfere with other people.' With that he continued his road; and I turned to one of his followers, asking whom he might be. 'He is the imam Muhamad bin Idris Al-Shafi!' the man answered."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the holy old woman continued thus:

The khalifat Abu-Giafar Al-Mansur wished to make Abu-Hanifa a judge and to allow him ten thousand dirhams a year. When Abu-Hanifa learnt of his intention he made his morning prayer and wrapped himself in the silence of his white robe. He made no answer to the herald sent by the khalifat to pay him the ten thousand dirhams in advance, and to announce his nomination; so that at last the herald said: "Be very sure, dear master, that this money I bring you is a lawful thing, allowed by the Book." Then said Abu-Hanifa: "In truth money is lawful; but Abu-Hanifa can never serve a tyrant."

After these instances, the old woman added: "I would willingly adduce further examples of the wise lives of old time; but night approaches and Allah allows us many days." With that, she wrapped her great veil about her shoulders and withdrew with her five pupils.

Here the wazir Dandan ceased speaking for a moment to Al-Makan and his sister Nuzhat, who was behind the curtain; but after a few seconds he continued:

When the late king, your father, heard these edifying discourses, he understood that these five women were as learned as they were beautiful, the supreme marvels of their time. He did not know how to show his great desire for them and his respect for the sainted old woman who accompanied them. To begin with, he gave them those apartments which had before belonged to Queen Abriza of Cesarea; and every day for ten days he himself came for news of them and to see that they lacked nothing. On each occasion he found the old woman in prayer, and heard that she had passed the day in fasting and the night in meditations; so that at length he said to me, "O wazir, what a blessing it is to have so holy a woman staying in my palace. My respect for her is as great as my love for her young charges. Now that the ten days due to hospitality are passed and we may talk of business, come with me and we will ask her to fix a price for those sweet-breasted virgins." We did so, and the old woman answered: "O king, the condition of the sale of these girls is other than the condition of the markets; their price cannot be weighed in gold or silver or precious stones."

Your father was astonished and asked of what such a price might consist. Then the old woman said to him: "I can only sell them on condition that you fast for a whole month, passing your days in meditation and your nights in washing and prayer. At the end of that time, when your body has become purified and worthy of communion with them, you may enjoy their bodies for nothing."

The king was extremely edified at this condition. His respect for the old woman knew no bounds and he hastened to accept. Then said the old woman: "I will myself help you with my prayers to endure the

fast. Now fetch me a copper pitcher." When this was brought, she filled it with pure water and murmured unknown words over it for the space of an hour; then she covered the mouth with a piece of light fabric, which she sealed with her own seal, and gave it to your father, saying: "At the end of the first ten days of your fast, you must unseal this and drink of its holy water, which will strengthen you and wash away impurities of your life. Meanwhile I will depart to find my brothers who are the Unseen Folk, since I have not communed with them for a long time. On the morning of the eleventh day I will come again."

The old woman then wished the king peace, and departed.

Your father took the pitcher and placed it as sole furnishing in an isolated cell which was in the palace. Then he locked himself in, to fast and meditate and become worthy of the bodies of the girls. He put the key in the body of his robe and began his fast.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ON THE MORNING of the eleventh day, the king unsealed the pitcher and drained it at a single draught. At once he felt a pleasant well-being throughout his body and feeling of comfort in his bowels. Soon after he had drunk there was a knocking at the door of the cell and, when the king unlocked it, the old woman

entered carrying a packet covered with fresh banana-leaves.

To the welcome which your father accorded her the old woman answered: "O king, the Unseen Folk are delighted that we are friends; they send through me their greetings and this packet of delicious jams, wrought by the black-eyed virgins of Paradise. On the morning of the twenty-first day of your fast, you must unfasten these banana-leaves, and appease your hunger with the holy jams." Omar Al-Neman joyfully answered: "Praise be to Allah who has given me brothers among the Unseen Folk!" Then he kissed the hands of the old woman in thanks and escorted her, with many compliments, to the door of the cell.

On the morning of the twenty-first day, as soon as your father had obeyed his instructions, the old woman returned, saying: "O king, I have told my brothers of the Unseen that I am making you a gift of the five young girls. They are delighted to hear this, as they feel friendly disposed towards you. They have commanded me to take the girls to them before they come into your hands, so that they may breathe over them such scents as shall intoxicate you; then they will send them back, bearing as a gift from the Unseen a treasure long hoarded up within the breast of earth."

"This is almost too much," said the king. "I fear that in taking the treasure I might wrong someone." But the old woman reassured him, so that at last he asked: "When will you return them to me?" "On the morning of the thirtieth day," she answered. "When you have finished your fast and sanctified your body, I shall bring them in a sweet purity as of jasmin; and you shall lie with them, though each is worth more than your kingdom. . . . Have you not some other

woman whom you love, whom I may take with my charges to receive the perfumed purification of my immortal brothers?" "Thanks, thanks," rejoined your father. "I have a Greek woman in my palace, named Saffia, daughter of King Aphridonios of Constantinople; she bore me two children who have been lost to me, alas, these many years. Take her with you, O venerable saint, that the Unseen Folk may assoil her and give her back her children." "Certainly I will do so," said the holy creature, "Bring her to me."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING SENT at once for Saffia and intrusted her to the old woman. The latter went for an instant into her own apartment and returned with a cup covered and sealed, which she gave to Omar Al-Neman, saying: "On the thirtieth morning when your fast is over, rise and bathe at the hammam; then return to your cell, and drink this cup which will complete your purification. Peace be with you now, my son, and the mercy of Allah and all His blessing."

When the old woman had left the palace with the five girls and your mother, Queen Saffia, the king continued his fast until the thirtieth day. In the morning he rose and went to the hammam, and after bathing returned to his cell. He forbade anyone to disturb him, locked the door again, unsealed the cup, and, drinking its contents, lay down to rest.

We knew that this was the last day of the fast, so we waited until evening, and then through the night, and lastly until the middle of the next day. We said to ourselves that the king slept long because of his many watchings; but at last, when he would not open to us and did not answer our cries, we burst down the door and entered the cell.

The king was not there; but on his couch there were shreds of flesh mingled with black and crumbling bones.

Each of us swooned away; but when we recovered we examined the cup and found inside the cover of it a paper, on which was the following writing:

“Let there be no tears for an evil man! Who reads this shall know what punishment waits for one who seduces and corrupts the daughters of kings. This man sent his son Sharkan to abduct Abriza, the unhappy daughter of our king; and, when she was brought to him, he took her, virgin that she was, and did to her that which he did. Then he gave her to a black slave, who meted out to her indignity and death. King Omar Al-Neman did this thing and lo! he is not. I killed him; I the brave, the avenger, the Mother-of-Calamity. Also I have taken Saffia, daughter of King Aphridonios of Constantinople, back to her father; and we will return in arms to slaughter you all upon the ruins of your houses. Over the whole earth there shall remain none but Christians, who adore the Cross!”

When we had read this, we understood the full horror of our calamity. We wept, though weeping was useless; and beat our faces, though no beatings can bring back the dead.

At last after a month of discord among the people as to who should succeed Omar Al-Neman, it was de-

cided to elect Prince Sharkan of Damascus. But Allah in His mercy threw us across your path, though we had not heard of you for many years.

Such, O king, was the death of your father, Omar Al-Neman.

When the wazir Dandan had finished his story of the death of King Omar Al-Neman, he covered his face and wept; as did also Al-Makan and Nuzhat, behind her curtain, and the grand-chamberlain.

The chamberlain was the first to recover himself; he said to Al-Makan: "O king, tears cannot bring your father back again; therefore harden your heart with courage to watch over the interests of your kingdom. As all fathers live again in worthy sons, so shall your father live again in you." Therefore Al-Makan ceased to weep and prepared to hold the first council of his reign.

He sat on his throne under the dome, with the chamberlain upright at his side, the Wazir Dandan before him, the soldiers behind his throne, and the emirs and notables grouped sedulously about him according to their rank.

His first care was to enquire into the state of his father's treasury, and, when Dandan had furnished him with a complete list of all the treasure and jewels which Omar Al-Neman had left, he said to the old man: "O wazir of my father, you shall be my wazir." Dandan kissed the earth between his hands and wished him a long life. Then the king said to the chamberlain: "Let all the riches which we brought with us from Damascus be distributed among the army."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE CHAMBERLAIN opened the cases and parted every sumptuous item of their contents among the soldiery, reserving the best for the officers, but keeping nothing for himself. The officers kissed the earth between his hands and called down blessings on the king, saying: "Never have we beheld such an act of generosity!"

Only after this division had been made did Al-Makan strike his tents and lead the army towards Baghdad. He entered a city of which every stone was decorated; and passed to his palace between terraced masses of his people, deafened by the shrill joy of women.

His first act was to call his chief scribe and to dictate a letter to his brother Sharkan, containing a detailed account of all that had passed, and concluding with these words:

"We beg our brother to make immediate preparation of his army and to unite his forces with ours, that we may join in sacred war against the threatening Infidels and avenge the death of our father."

When he had folded and sealed this letter, he intrusted it to Dandan, saying: "My friend, only you are capable of carrying through this delicate negotiation. You must speak sweet words to him, and add from me that I am very ready to give up the throne of Baghdad and take his place as governor of Damascus." Dandan made his preparations in haste, and departed that very evening for Damascus.

While he was away, two important things came to

pass in the palace of Al-Makan. The first was this: the king called his friend, the old fireman of the hammam, loaded him with honours and distinctions, and gave him a palace for himself, spread with the rarest carpets of Persia and Khorassan. There will be much more to say of this excellent fellow as the tale goes on. The second was this: ten young white slaves were sent in tribute to the king, and one of them appeared so indescribably beautiful to him that he lay with her, and she conceived. Our story will also have more to tell concerning this woman.

In the course of time, Dandan returned and reported to the king that his brother, Sharkan, had listened favourably to his request and was even then on the way at the head of his army. "We should go out to meet him," said the wazir; and the king answered: "Certainly, O wazir." He immediately left Baghdad with all his forces; and, hardly had he pitched his camp after the first day's march, when the scouts of Prince Sharkan's army appeared in sight.

Al-Makan, taking the initiative, went forward to meet his brother and would have lighted off his horse to greet him; but Sharkan, from far off saw what he would be at and called to him not to dismount. Then he himself jumped to the ground and ran and threw himself into his brother's arms. The two embraced each other with many tears and words of mutual mourning for their father.

As soon as both armies had returned to Baghdad, word was sent to all parts of the empire with promises of booty and promotion; so that, for a whole month, a constant stream of warriors flowed into the city. While they were waiting, Sharkan told Al-Makan all his story, and Al-Makan told Sharkan all his, insisting especially on the services of the fireman. Sharkan

asked him if he had already rewarded that faithful friend for his devotion, and the king answered that he meant to complete the work of recognition when he returned from the war.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHARKAN WAS NOW able to test the truth of the story which had been told him by his sister, Nuzhat, who had born him the girl, Power-of-Destiny, and he thought to ask news of her. He begged the chamberlain to carry his greetings to her, and the chamberlain returned with Nuzhat's salutation and enquiries about the little girl. Sharkan was able to set her mind at rest, as little Power-of-Destiny stayed in perfect health at Damascus.

When all the troop were filled and assembled, and Arabs from all the tribes had brought a great force to the city, the two brothers put themselves at the head of the massed army (Al-Makan had said tender farewells to his pregnant slave-girl and provided her with a fitting service in all things) and set out from Baghdad questing for the lands of the Infidel.

The vanguard was formed by Turkish warriors under a chief named Bahraman, the rearguard of Persian soldiers commanded by Rustem, the centre was under Al-Makan, the right wing was commanded by Prince Sharkan, and the left by the grand-chamber-

lain. Dandan was second-in-command of all the forces.

They moved forward for a month, resting three days at the end of each week, until they came into the country of their enemies; where the inhabitants fled to Constantinople and informed King Aphridonios of the Mussulman invasion.

King Aphridonios called for old Mother-of-Calamity (for you must know that she had come to him to return his daughter, Saffia, and had persuaded her nursling, King Hardobios of Cesarea, to accompany her, bringing with him all the army to join with that of Aphridonios. This he had done willingly as he was not content with the death of Omar Al-Neman, but wished further vengeance for his daughter) and asked her advice as to what should be done.

Mother-of-Calamity answered: "Great king, lieutenant of Christ upon this earth, I will show you what to do, and Satan himself with all his arts shall never unwind the threads which I am weaving for the feet of our enemies."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Eighty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MOTHER-OF-CALAMITY outlined her plan as follows:

"Send fifty thousand warriors by boat to the Mountain of Smoke, at whose foot our enemies are en-

camped, and all the rest of your army round by the land way, so that our foul oppressors may be taken on both sides and not one escape."

To this Aphridonios replied: "Truly that is an excellent idea, queen of old women, inspiration of the wise." Straightway he put her plan into execution; his ships landed the warriors at the Mountain of Smoke, where they hid without any noise behind the high rocks; and the rest of the army went round by land until they were opposite the enemy.

At this time the opposing forces had these numbers: the Mussulman army from Baghdad consisted of twenty thousand horsemen led by Prince Sharkan; the two bands of the impious Christians amounted to a thousand thousand on one side, and six hundred thousand on the other, so that, when night fell on the mountains and the deserts, the earth seemed like one brazier with all the camp-fires of the unbelievers.

The kings Aphridonios and Hardobios called their emirs and their captains to a solemn council, in which they were on the point of deciding to attack next morning from both sides, when Mother-of-Calamity frowned and thus addressed the company:

"Brave warriors, to fight with the body when the soul is not sanctified is to ensure defeat; therefore, O Christian men, I counsel you to draw near to Christ before the battle and to purify yourselves with the supreme incense of the patriarchal excrements." The two kings and all the captains shouted: "Your words are wise, venerable mother!"

To tell you something of the supreme incense of the patriarchal excrements:

When the High Patriarch of the Christians in Constantinople made a motion, the priests would diligently collect it in squares of silk and dry it in the

sun. Then they would mix it with musk, amber, and benzoin; and, when it was quite dry, powder it and put it up in little gold boxes. These boxes were sent to all Christian kings and churches, and the powder was used as the holiest incense for sanctifying Christians on all solemn occasions; to bless the bride, to fumigate the newly born, and to purify a priest on his ordination. As the genuine excrements of the High Patriarch could hardly suffice for ten provinces, much less for all Christian lands, the priests used to forge the powder by mixing less holy matters with it; that is to say, the excrements of lesser patriarchs and even of the priests themselves. This imposture was not easy to detect. These Greek swine valued the powder for other virtues; they used it as a salve for sore eyes and as a medicine for the stomach and bowels; but only kings and queens and the very rich could obtain these cures, since, owing to the limited quantity of raw material, a dirham-weight of the powder used to be sold for a thousand dinars in gold. So much for it.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninetieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN THE MORNING King Aphridonios assembled the captains and lieutenants of his army and, making them kiss a great cross of wood, fumigated them with the incense described above. On this occasion there could be no doubt as to the genuineness of the powder as it

smelt terribly and would have killed any elephant in the Mussulman armies. The Greek pigs were accustomed to it, however.

After this ceremony, Mother-of-Calamity rose and said: "O king, before we fight with these Unbelievers, it were better to assure our victory by getting rid of Prince Sharkan, who is Satan in person. He not only commands the whole army but is the heart of its courage, so that when he is dead, his men will fall an easy prey to us. Let the boldest of our warriors challenge him to single combat and slay him."

Acting on this advice, King Aphridonios sent for the most valorous of his knights, whose name was Luka bin Shamlut, and with his own hand not only fumigated him with the excremental incense but spat upon some of the powder, to make it into a paste, and daubed the gums, nostrils, cheeks, eyebrows, and moustaches of his champion with it.

This hateful Luka was certainly the most terrible fighter among the Christians; none like him could hurl the javelin, wield the sword, or direct the terrible lance. His valour was only equalled by his ugliness. At first sight you would take his face for that of a mongrel ass; looking more closely, you would find much of the ape in it; and when you had, as it were, learnt it by heart, you would recognise in it a cross between a toad and one of the most loathsome serpents. To come near him was less supportable than to be separated from a friend; he had stolen his colouring from night and his breath from old latrines. For these reasons he was known as the Sword of Christ.

When Luka had been well fumigated, he kissed the feet of Aphridonios, and the latter said to him: "Go out, my son; challenge the wretched Sharkan to single combat, and rid us of our woes." Luka kissed the

cross and then mounted on a magnificent chestnut horse, with a jewelled saddle and red housings. As he was armed with a three-pointed javelin, he appeared like Satan in person when the heralds led him towards the camp of the Believers.

One of the heralds cried out in Arabic, as they came near the tents: "O Mussulmans, behold Luka bin Shamlut, a champion who has put to flight Turks, Kurds, and Persians with his single sword! Let Sharkan of Damascus come out against our giant if he dare!"

Hardly had the challenge ended when galloping hoofs shook the earth, troubled the air, and terrified the heart of the wicked knight. Sharkan himself, in appearance like a lion and mounted upon a horse lighter than a young gazelle, charged with couched lance towards the Christian, shouting these verses:

*My horse might borrow from the winter cloud
Its swift grey stuff;
My lance is but a war-song cried aloud:
It is enough.*

The barbarian Luka, born in a brutish land, understood no Arabic, so he could not appreciate the rhythmical beauty of these lines; he contented himself with touching the tattooed semblance of a cross upon his forehead and then carrying his hand to his lips. Suddenly, looking as hideous as a hog in the saddle, he urged his horse towards Sharkan, reined it in quickly in mid-gallop, and hurled his javelin so high in air that it disappeared from sight. At length it fell; but, before it could touch the earth, the vile fellow caught it in his hand, as if he had been a sorcerer, and with the same motion hurled it at Sharkan with all his

strength. The three-pronged weapon hummed through the air like a thunder-bolt but, just at the moment when it would taste the life of Sharkan, the prince stretched forth his hand and caught it. Glorious Sharkan! He also hurled the javelin in the air so that no man's eye might follow it and, as it fell, with a single movement both caught it and flung it back to the Christian, crying: "A lesson for you, in the name of Him who made the seven stages of the sky!"

The gigantic Luka attempted to imitate Sharkan's feat, but, as he stretched forth his hand and thus uncovered himself, the prince launched his own javelin, which struck the Christian full in his tattooed cross. His unbelieving soul fled through his backside and went to mingle with the fires of hell.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent

*But When
The Ninety-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE CHRISTIAN soldiers heard of the death of their champion from the heralds, they first beat their faces in grief and then sprang to arms crying for death and vengeance.

The two kings gave a signal and their men rushed upon the Mussulmans. Warrior engaged with warrior, cry answered cry, blood bathed all the harvest of the fields, bodies were crushed beneath the feet of the horses, and men got drunk with blood as if it had been wine. The dead fell upon the dead, and the

wounded upon the wounded, until merciful night separated the opposing forces.

Al-Makan congratulated his brother on his immortal exploit and then addressed Dandan and the grand chamberlain in these words: "Take twenty thousand warriors and march them seven parasangs towards the sea; wait in the valley of the Mountain of Smoke until I call you to decisive battle by hoisting a green standard. The rest of us will pretend to flee, but when the Infidels pursue us, we will turn upon them; so that they shall be caught between two ranks and destroyed before we can cry victory."

Dandan and the chamberlain did as they were ordered; under cover of night they took up their position in the valley at the foot of the Mountain of Smoke. It will be seen that they would have all been destroyed if Mother-of-Calamity's better and earlier plan had been adhered to. But that part of the Christian army which had hidden among the rocks there, had already joined the main band. In the morning the warriors stood to arms on both sides, standards and crosses shone above the tents, and prayers were made for victory. The Believers listened to a perlection of the Chapter of the Cow, which is the first in the Koran; while the Christians called upon the Son of Mary and fumigated themselves with a doubtless inferior brand—for there were many of them—of fæcal incense. It did not save them from destruction.

The battle re-engaged more terrible than before; heads flew through the air like balls, arms and legs lay thick as grass upon the ground, and rivers of blood reached the breasts of the horses. Suddenly, the Mussulmans, who had fought like heroes, seemed stricken by panic; for they turned and fled to a man.

Aphridonios, seeing this, sent a runner to Hardobios, whose troops had not yet taken part in the battle, saying: "The Mussulmans are fleeing because we are invincible owing to the supreme incense of the patriarchal excrements with which we have fumigated ourselves and rubbed our beards. Pursue them, so that you may put a crown upon our victory and avenge the death of our champion, Luka."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KING HARDOBIOS, burning to avenge the death of his admirable daughter, Abriza, and not knowing that the retreat was but a ruse of the brave Sharkan and Al-Makan, cried to his warriors: "The Mussulmans flee like women!" and set out in hot pursuit. Hardly were they within striking distance, when the retreating army turned and threw themselves upon their pursurers. Sharkan cried out: "Allah akbar! Allah akbar!" and Al-Makan cried out: "This is the day of religion, O you Faithful; this is the day for gaining Paradise in the shadow of the sword!" The Faithful charged like lions; and truly it was not a day on which any Christian grew old: few of them lived to bewail the coming of white hairs.

It would be impossible to describe the deeds of warlike daring done by Sharkan upon that day; while he was hewing in pieces all who came before him, Al-

Makan hoisted the green signal and would have precipitated himself into the fray. Sharkan saw this from far off and galloped up to his brother, saying: "Do not expose yourself to the chances of the battle, for you are necessary to the government of our people. If you needs must fight, stay by my side and I will protect you."

Dandan and the chamberlain saw the signal and at once advanced in a half circle, so that the Christians were cut off from their boats. In these circumstances the issue was never in doubt. The Christians were terribly destroyed by Kurds, Persians, Turks, and Arabs; a hundred and twenty thousand swine lay dead upon the field of battle, while a pitiful handful escaped in the direction of Constantinople. The people of Aphridonios, who had retired to the heights with their king, sure that Hardobios and his Greeks would carry the day, watched in impotent agony the destruction and flight of their allies.

On that day the Believers gained enormous booty; they captured all the ships, with the exception of twenty which managed to reach Constantinople with news of the disaster, and all the riches which were in the ships; and they took a thousand delicately-harnessed horses, with tents, weapons and provisions beyond counting. For this day they thanked Allah.

The stragglers dragged themselves into Constantinople, their souls winged by the ravens of disaster, and the whole city was plunged in gloom. Houses and churches were draped in black, the people collected in disaffected groups crying sedition and, when only twenty vessels of the fleet and twenty thousand men of the army returned, accused their kings of treason.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE TROUBLE AND terror of King Aphridonios were so great that his nose was bowed to his feet, his stomach turned inside out, and his bowels loosed so that they slid forth from him. He called Mother-of-Calamity to advise him, and she came.

You must know that old Mother-of-Calamity, who was the real cause of all these misfortunes, was indeed a horror among old women. She was libertine, faithless, and rotten with curses; her mouth was a cesspool, her red eyelids had no lashes, her cheeks were dirty and lack-lustre, her face was black as night, her eyes were blar and her body covered with scabs, her hair was filthy, her back was bent, and her skin was a mass of wrinkles. She was a festering sore among festering sores, and a viper among vipers. The horrible old thing passed most of her time in the palace of King Hardobios in Cesarea because of the great quantity of young men and women slaves which she found there. She used to compel the young male slaves to mount her and she herself loved to mount the young female slaves. Above all things she loved to tickle and rub herself against these virgin bodies; she was terribly expert in the titillant art, and could suck the delicate parts of a girl voraciously while rubbing their nipples in an agreeable manner. To bring on the last spasm, she would anoint their womanhood with saffron and they would throw themselves into

her arms with a dying ecstasy. She had taught these practices to all the slaves in the palace and, in times past, to the young followers of Abriza; but she could never win over the slim Coral-Pearl to her desires. Abriza herself held her in detestation for many reasons: her foul breath, the smell of fermented piss which rose from her armpits and her groin, the putrid aura, like that of rotten garlic, which remained from the many times that she had broken wind, her hairiness which was more than that of a hedge-hog, and the palm-fibre-like texture of her skin. Excellently applicable to her are the words of a certain poet:

*All her perfumers with their scented arts
Could not disguise the fetor of her farts.*

It must be admitted, however, that Mother-of-Calamity could be very generous to all those who submitted to her desires; it was only because she had been refused, that she had hated Abriza so much.

Both kings rose when she entered; and she said to Aphridonios, who had requested her advice: "O king, the time is come to set on one side all patriarchal blessings and excremental incenses, and to act by the light of reason. Mussulmans are marching upon our city; it is therefore necessary to send out heralds to command all the people and the soldiers in far garisons to take refuge within the walls of Constantinople. As for myself; if you give me a free hand, the world will soon be ringing with my deadly inventions against the Mussulman. I depart at once; may Christ, the Son of Mary, have you in His keeping." She left the city, and King Aphridonios hastened to give effect to her advice.

Now let us consider the plan which that old libertine had devised.

She took with her from the city fifty chosen warriors who could speak Arabic, disguised as Mussulman merchants from Damascus, and a hundred mules laden with silks of Antioch and Damascus, satins having a metal sheen, and royal brocades. She had also taken care to provide herself with safe conduct from Aphridonios in the form of this letter:

“These are Mussulman merchants from Damascus, are strangers to our country and our faith; but they have traded with us. As in trade resides the prosperity of kingdoms and as these men are not in any sense warriors, we give them this safe conduct that none may hinder them where they wish to go, or levy tithe and tax upon their goods.”

The guileful old woman disguised herself as a Mussulman ascetic, putting on a white linen robe and rubbing a magic unguent of her own invention into the skin of her face until it shone with peerless sanctity. She drew cords tight about her feet until they bled and indelible marks were left upon them. Then she addressed her companions in these words:

First, you must beat me with whips until my body bleeds and bears lasting scars: spare me not, for necessity knows no law. Then place me in a chest like the other chests of our merchandise and load me upon a mule. After that, march straight forward until you come to the camp of the Mussulmans under Sharkan. When they wish to prevent your going further, show this letter, in which you are described as Damascus merchants, and demand to see Prince Sharkan.

You will be led into his presence and he will question you concerning your trade among the Christians. You must say to him:

“Auspicious king, the best and most meritorious profit of our trading journey among these unbelieving Christians was the freeing of a certain holy ascetic whom we were able to remove from between the hands of his persecutors. For fifteen long years they had tortured him to make him abjure the blessed faith of Muhamad, upon whom be prayer and peace. The thing happened in this way:

“We had been some time buying and selling in Constantinople and were seated in our lodging one night, calculating the gains of the day, when suddenly we saw a very great shadow appear on the wall of the room, in the likeness of a man with weeping eyes and a venerable white beard. The sad lips of this apparition spoke slowly to us thus: ‘If there are any among you who fear Allah and follow letter by letter the precepts of our Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) let them depart from this land of Unbelievers and journey towards the army of Prince Sharkan, of whom it is written that he will surely some day hold within his hands the city of Constantinople. At the end of three days’ march you shall come to a certain monastery. Within this building, at such and such a place, you will find an underground cell in which a holy ascetic from Mecca, who is called Abdalla and whose virtues are pleasant to God, has been shut up by Christian monks for fifteen years and tortured horribly for the sake of his religion. To free this saint will be a beautiful action in the sight of Allah; and may have other advantage beside. I say no more; peace be with you.’

“With that the appearance of the sad old man faded from before our eyes.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“WITHOUT A MOMENT’S delay we packed up all the merchandise which yet remained to us and all which we had bought in the city, and left Constantinople the same night. After three days we found the monastery. It stood near a little village: so, in order not to excite suspicion, we exposed a part of our goods in the market-place and bought and sold until nightfall. Then, under cover of darkness, we stole towards the monastery, stunned the monk at the gate, and made our way to the underground chamber. There, as the apparition had told us, we found the holy ascetic Abdalla, whom we have brought to you in one of our cases.”

When you have obeyed me in all these things, my children, I will do the rest myself and exterminate these Mussulmans.

The fifty soldiers, after listening to this speech, made obeisance to the old woman, beat her till the blood flowed copiously, and then placed her in a chest on the back of one of their mules. Then they set off to fulfil the rest of her strategy.

The victorious army of the Believers divided the booty which they had taken and glorified Allah for their victory. Al-Makan and Sharkan took each other’s hands and embraced, while Sharkan said to

his brother: "I pray that Allah may grant your pregnant slave a son, whom I can marry to my daughter Power-of-Destiny." They ceased not to rejoice and congratulate each other until the wazir Dandan said: "O kings, it would be wise and fitting if you pursued your defeated foe without loss of time, and besieged Constantinople; so that the last one of them may be destroyed from off the face of this earth. A poet has said:

*It is great ease
To feel your enemies
Trode down by the wild horse between your knees.*

*It is greater ease
To read love's messages
When she is following close after these.*

*It is greatest ease
When by forced urgencies
She comes to you before her messages.*

*But it is great ease
To feel your enemies
Trode down by the wild horse between your knees."*

Dandan made an end of this recitation; and the two kings immediately led their army towards Constantinople.

They continued for six days without rest across burnt plains, where only grew a little yellow grass in solitudes else inhabited by God. At the end of this harassing march over waterless wastes, they came to a region which had been blessed by Allah. Fresh meadows stretched before them, diversified by noisy

waterfalls, above which grew fruit trees. Birds sang there, gazelles leapt there, so that the place seemed some new Paradise, with its great trees drunken with the dew upon their branches, and its flowers smiling to a vagabond south wind. A poet has said:

First look:

*The garden moss stretches an emerald cloak
Shadowed by the kisses of the sleeping flowers.*

Then shut your eyes:

Streams are singing about the feet of rose-trees.

Now look again:

*Water glitters in the sunlight
Like tears upon a cheek in willow shade,
And flings up drops
To hang for silver bells
In the bright-hued pavilion of the flowers.*

O flowers, crown my beloved.

The two brothers breathed in the delights of this place and thought of resting there for some time. Al-Makan said to Sharkan: "Brother, I do not think that you have ever seen gardens in Damascus as beautiful as this. Let us remain here for two or three days, so that our soldiers may be refreshed by the good air and sweet water, and fight the better against the Unbelievers." Sharkan found this plan to his taste, and it was carried out.

They had rested in that pleasant place for two days and were on the point of departure, when they heard voices upon the outskirts of their host and were told that a caravan of Damascus merchants, who were re-

turning to their own country after trading with the Infidels, had been stopped by the soldiery who wished to punish them for holding communication with the enemies of Allah. Soon the merchants were haled before the two kings and threw themselves upon the ground, protesting and saying to Al-Makan: "We have been in the land of the Infidel and they have let no man harm us; but now that we have fallen among our own people, among Believers, we encounter oppression for the first time."

They gave their letter of safe-conduct, written by the King of Constantinople, to Al-Makan, who read it and passed it to Sharkan. When Sharkan had also glanced at the contents, he said: "What has been taken from you will be restored. But tell me why you traded with the enemies of our Faith?" The merchants answered: "O master, Allah led us among the Christians that we might win a victory, greater than all the victories of your army." "How was that?" asked Sharkan smiling; and they answered: "We can only speak of it in some retired spot, where none may overhear us; for if the thing became noised abroad, never might Mussulman again set foot in a Christian land, even in times of peace."

Al-Makan and Sharkan conducted the merchants to an isolated tent.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the merchants told the two kings the tale in which they had been coached by Mother-of-Calamity. The brothers were much moved when they heard of the sufferings of the holy ascetic and his deliverance from the dungeon. They asked the merchants where he might be now, and received this answer: "When we killed the monk who was guarding the monastery, we shut the saint in a chest that his departure might not be perceived and brought him to you. But before we left the monastery we had time to see that it contained great weights of gold and silver, gems and jewellery, of which the holy man will be able to tell you more than we can."

So saying, the merchants hastened to unload the mule and, opening the great chest, led the ascetic into the presence of the two kings. He was so thin and wrinkled that he looked like a black cassia-pod and there were the marks of whips and chains upon his flesh.

Seeing him (but you must remember that it was really old Mother-of-Calamity!) the brothers were convinced that they were in the presence of one of the holiest of men—the more, as that mysterious ointment made the old schemer's face shine like the sun with holiness—so, weeping and sobbing at his sufferings, they kissed his hands and feet and asked his blessing. The saint signed to them to rise, saying: "Weep not, but listen to me:

"I have willingly submitted to the will of my

Master, knowing that each scourge He sends me is but a test of patience and humility. Glorify Him, glorify Him! A man that cannot abide His chastening shall never enter into the delights of Paradise. If I rejoice at all at being freed, it is not because my sufferings have come to an end; but because it has led me to you, where I may die under the feet of the horses in a Holy War. He who is killed in a Holy War does not die, but inherits eternal life."

The two brothers kissed the saint's hands again, and tried to persuade him to eat; but he refused, saying: "I have fasted in Allah's name by day for fifteen years; it would be impious to break that fast now that He has delivered me out of affliction. Perhaps I will eat a little tonight when the sun has gone down." They insisted no further at that time, but in the evening they prepared meats and presented them with their own hands. Then said the treacherous old dame: "Now is not the time to eat but to pray!" All that night, and the next, and the next, she stayed without sleeping in the prayer-niche, so that the brothers venerated their saint more and more and gave him a large tent, with special slaves and cooks. As he still would not eat at the end of three days, the kings themselves brought him food such as the eye and the soul might dream of; but he would only eat a little dry bread with salt. Said Sharkan to Al-Makan: "Here is a man who has given up every joy of earth; if my business were not war, I would consecrate myself to his service, following him all my life that he might bless me. But now, as we have to march on Constantinople, let us beg him to say somewhat to us that we may profit by it." Then said the wazir Dandan: "I also would see this saint, and beg him to pray for me in case I lose my life in the

coming battle and go to present myself before the Master: I think that I have had enough of this life."

All three entered the tent of sly old Mother-of-Calamity, and found their ascetic in an ecstatic trance of prayer. They sat down to wait until he should have finished praying; but as three hours passed without his paying the least attention to them, in spite of the tears and sobs of admiration with which they tried to attract his notice, they advanced at length and kissed the ground in front of him. Then, and only then, he rose and wished them welcome, saying: "Why do you come to see me at this hour?" "O holy dreamer," they answered, "we have been here several hours already. Did you not hear our tears?" The saint replied: "He who is in the presence of God knows nothing of what passes on the earth beneath." "Holy one," they said, "we came to ask a blessing before the battle and to hear the story of your captivity among those, whom by God's grace, we shall slay tomorrow." "As Allah lives," answered the wily old baggage, "if you were not the princes of the Believers I would not tell you, because he who hears my story may draw therefrom considerable wordly advantage. Listen then:

THE TALE OF THE MONASTERY

For a long time I lived in Sacred Places with pious men and, as Allah had given me humility, I never set myself up against them. I had thought to pass the rest of my life in peace, in accomplishing the uneventful duties of piety; but I reckoned without my destiny.

A night came when I wandered towards the sea,

which I had never seen before, and the resolution suddenly formed within me to walk upon the water. I set myself to do this and was astonished to find myself moving easily upon the surface of the waves without wetting the soles of my feet. After walking great distances, I returned towards the shore, marvelling all the time at my new gift, so that my heart became uplifted with pride and I thought: "Who can walk upon the water as I can?" Hardly had I formed this thought when Allah punished me by planting in my mind a love of travel. I left the Sacred Places and since then I have been a wanderer upon the face of the earth. One day in those travels, during which I fulfilled all the duties of religion, I came to a Christian monastery on the top of a high mountain. The monk who was in charge of this, a certain Matruna whom I had known before, ran out to greet me and invited me to enter and rest myself. In reality he was plotting my destruction; for, hardly had I accepted his invitation, when he led me along a gallery and, pushing me into darkness through a door at the end, locked me into an unlighted chamber, where I was left for forty days without food or drink, to die of hunger and thirst, as a witness to our religion.

While I was thus confined, the chief general of all the monks came on a special visit to the monastery; as is the custom with these gentry, he had with him ten pretty young monks and a girl, fairer than them all, dressed in a monk's robe, which showed off her breasts and hips to lascivious perfection. Allah alone knows what the monk-general used to do with this girl, who was called Tamasil, and with the young monks.

Matruna told his superior of my imprisonment and starvation; and the latter, whose name was Dakianus,

ordered them to open the door of my dungeon and cast away my bones, saying: "This Mussulman must be by now so bare a thing that even the birds of prey will not molest him." Matruna and the young monks opened the door and found me kneeling in an attitude of prayer; so, calling out: "Sorcerer, sorcerer, break him to pieces!" they fell upon me with sticks and whips, until I thought that I was lost. Then I understood that Allah was punishing me for pride: seeing that I had taken to myself the glory of walking upon the water, while I was all the time but an instrument between His hands. When Matruna and the other sons of dogs had well-nigh killed me, they chained me and threw me back into the dungeon. I would surely have died of hunger, had not the Lord touched the heart of Tamasil and caused her to provide me daily, in secret, with a barley-loaf and a pitcher of water. The monk-general stayed a long time at that monastery, because it pleased him; he decided to make it his permanent abiding place and, when he had to leave it to continue his inspections, he left Tamasil under the charge of the monk Matruna.

I remained in the dungeon for five years, while the girl grew up into the most beautiful damsel of her time. I affirm to you, O kings, that neither in our country nor among the Christians is her equal to be found. Nor is she the only jewel shut up in that monastery. The place is stored with inordinate gold and silver, and with jewels whose worth defies arithmetic. My advice to you is to take that monastery by assault without an hour's delay, if you would get possession of Tamasil and the other treasures. I myself will act as your guide, because I can open the secret doors and point out the hiding places where Dakianus has stored his holy vessels of carved gold. Also I would

be able to win the girl over to you; beside her beauty, she has the gift of song and knows all the Arabic compositions, whether city songs or Bedouin. Your days shall be full of light and your nights of sugar and benediction.

You have already heard of my escape, from those excellent merchants who risked their lives to save me. Allah curse all Christians from now to the day of judgment!

The two brothers heard this tale with great delight, for they dreamed of acquisitions and especially of young Tamasil, who was reported to be most expert in pleasure in spite of her few years. But Dandan had heard the story with considerable misgivings, and had only prevented himself from rising and leaving the tent because of the respect that was due to the two kings. The words of the strange ascetic neither convinced nor satisfied him; but he said nothing of his feelings, fearing lest they had led him astray.

Al-Makan wished to march upon the monastery at the head of all his army, but Mother-of-Calamity dissuaded him, saying: "I fear that when Dakianus sees the army he will carry off Tamasil and all his treasure." So Al-Makan called the grand-chamberlain and the emirs, Rustem and Bahraman, and said to them: "Tomorrow morning you must march on Constantinople; I will rejoin you there in a little while. The grand-chamberlain shall take my place of general commander of the army. Rustem will act for my brother Sharkan, and Bahraman for the wazir Dandan. Take good care that the army does not learn of our absence; for we shall only be away three days." Then the king, Sharkan, and the wazir Dandan chose a hundred of the bravest warriors and a hundred of the

strongest mules, which they loaded with empty chests to hold the treasure of the monastery. They took with them old Mother-of-Calamity, whom they thought to be an ascetic loved of Allah, and set out under her guidance for the monastery.

The grand-chamberlain and the rest of the Mussulman army folded their tents at dawn of the next day and, following the command of King Al-Makan, set out towards Constantinople.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

OLD MOTHER-OF-CALAMITY had not been idle. No sooner had the troops which escorted her left the camp than she took, from one of the chests which were on her mule, two trained pigeons; to the necks of these she attached a letter written to King Aphridonios of Constantinople. She told him of all that had happened, and ended with these words:

“Also, O king, you must send ten thousand of your finest warriors to the monastery immediately. When they come to the foot of the mountain, they must wait there for me; and I will deliver the two kings, the wazir, and a hundred warriors into their hands. My plan cannot come to fruition without the death of the monk Matruna who guards the monastery; I sacrifice him for the general good, as

the life of a monk is nothing to the safety of our religion.

“Praise be to Christ, our Lord, now and for ever more!”

The pigeons winged safely to their high tower in Constantinople, and the attendant hastened with the letter to King Aphridonios. As soon as he had read it, the king assembled ten thousand knights, each with a racing camel and a mule to carry the spoil, and sent them off hot-foot towards the monastery, as Mother-of-Calamity advised.

When the two kings and Dandan, with their following, came to the base of the mountain, they had to climb it alone; as Mother-of-Calamity, who was tired out by the journey, remained below, saying: “I will come after you when you have captured the place, and show you the hidden treasure of it.”

One by one the warriors reached the monastery and, climbing the walls, leapt into the garden. The monk Matruna ran out at the noise, but this was the last thing which he did; for Sharkan cried out: “Down with the dog!” and immediately the monk was pierced with a hundred swords and exhaled his soul from his backside to mingle with the fires of hell. Then was the monastery well pillaged; in the place of sacrifice a great treasure of jewels and vessels was taken from the walls and loaded upon the mules and camels; but nothing was seen of young Tamasil or the ten boys who were her equal in beauty; or of Dakianus, the licentious monk-general. When two days had been spent in exploring every place and no trace was found of any of these, Shakran said: “As God lives, my brother, I am anxious concerning the army of Islam,

which we sent towards Constantinople." "I think," answered Al-Makan, "that we should renounce our hopes in respect to Tamasil and, contenting ourselves with what Allah has given us in the way of treasure, rejoin our troops and lay waste the capital of the Infidels."

They climbed down into the valley to fetch the ascetic and then rejoin their army; but no sooner had they reached the lower ground when a great host of Christian soldiers appeared on all the encircling heights and with a loud war-cry began to charge down on Sharkan's band. "Who can have warned these Christians of our presence?" cried Al-Makan; but Sharkan interrupted him, saying: "There is no time for conjecture my brother; let us stand firm against these dogs and make such a killing that not one shall escape to light again the fire upon his hearth." Said Al-Makan: "If we had been warned, we could have had a greater force and made a better fight." But Dandan exclaimed: "Even if we had ten thousand they would be of little use in this narrow pass! But I believe that Allah will save us, because, through fighting here with the dead king, Omar Al-Neman, I learnt all the outlets of this valley and the situation of all the springs of icy water. Follow me, before all these outlets are occupied by the Unbelievers!"

As the band was about to follow him into safety, the holy ascetic appeared, crying: "Whither are you running, O Believers? Do you flee before the face of the enemy? You are in the hands of Allah; He will take your lives or spare them according to His will. Have you forgotten that I myself, shut up in a dungeon without food, was yet preserved by the Lord? If death should come, Paradise follows after!"

Courage came back to them at these words, so that

they halted in face of the enemy who charged them hotly. They were only a hundred and three men; but a Believer is worth a thousand Christians. Hardly had the Infidels come within reach of their arms than severed heads flew backwards like a flight of birds from the terrible sword play of the Mussulmans. Al-Makan and Sharkan severed each five heads with a single blow of their swords; ten men would rush upon the brothers and ten heads would fly in the air. The hundred warriors made a memorable carnage of these dogs until night brought succour to the larger force.

The Believers retired with their three chiefs into a cavern at the foot of a mountain. They found that the ascetic was missing and that only forty-five men remained of their own band. "God grant that the holy man has not perished in the struggle!" said Al-Makan; but Dandan answered: "I saw your ascetic during the battle! He seemed to me like some black Ifrit, exciting the Unbelievers to fight on." Even as he said this, the ascetic appeared at the entrance of the cave, holding the severed head of the leader of the Christians. The eyes of this terrible warrior were convulsed in death.

The two brothers leapt to their feet crying: "Thanks be to Allah that He has sent you back to us, O holy father!" "My dear sons," answered the reprobate and disguised old woman, "willingly would I have perished and many times did I throw myself among the swords, but even these Unbelievers revered me and spared me. So freely did they allow me to move about, that I sought out their leader and cut off his head with one stroke of my sword. I bring the spoil to you, that it may encourage you to fight more fiercely against a leaderless army."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MOTHER-OF-CALAMITY continued: "Now I shall run as fast as I can towards your army below the walls of Constantinople and get them to send help. Be of good cheer and a stout heart until they come. Pasture your blades in this impure blood to rejoice the Master of all armies." The two brothers kissed the speaker's hands in thanks, and said: "O saint, how can you leave the valley while it is entirely ringed by Christians, who will rain rocks down upon you when they see you?" "Allah will guard me," said the old woman. "He will blind the Infidels before He destroys them." "You speak truth, most holy father," answered Shar-kan. "I myself saw you as a lion among them and not one of the dogs dared to approach you. You will save us, never fear. Night has fallen; so that the sooner you set out, the better. May Allah guide you through the darkness."

The false ascetic attempted to take Al-Makan with her that she might deliver him to his enemies; but Dandan, who a little distrusted the strange manners of the equivocal saint, persuaded the king to remain; so that Mother-of-Calamity set out alone, with a parting sidelong glance at the wazir.

You must know that the old woman had lied when she said that she had cut off the head of the chief of the Christians; that is to say, she had lied as to the

manner of it, for she had cut his head from his dead body. A most warlike youth among the Mussulmans had killed the opposing general and paid for the exploit with his life. All the Christians, seeing their leader remit his soul to hell, had thrown themselves upon the Mussulman and cut him in pieces. His soul was already in Paradise between the hands of Allah.

The devoted band in the cave woke at dawn, refreshed and ready for the fray. They prayed after the necessary ablutions and, when Al-Makan gave the word, hurled themselves upon the enemy as lions attack a herd of swine. That day they satisfied all their foes with carnage. Sword fell on sword, lance on lance, and javelin upon breastplate. The Believers threw themselves again and again into the fight, like blood-maddened wolves, whilst Sharkan and Al-Makan shed such waves of blood that the river of the valley overflowed and the gorge itself was hidden by hills of the slain.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT NIGHTFALL the combatants separated; the Mussulmans returned to their cave, leaving thirty-five men upon the battlefield, so that they were reduced to ten warriors, two kings, and a wazir; and had all the more need of trusting to Allah and the excellence of

their swords. Sharkan was grieved at their losses. "What shall we do now?" he said with a sigh; and what were left of his people answered: "We can do nothing, save with Allah."

Sharkan passed the night without sleeping and roused his companions at daybreak, saying: "My friends, as there are only thirteen of us left, I consider that it would be fatal to go out against the enemy; for, even if we fought prodigiously as we have done before, not one of us would come back alive. I decree, therefore, that we shall hold this cave with our swords and provoke our enemies to attempt the assault. We can easily cut to pieces any who dare to enter the cave, for we have the advantage in a confined space. We shall be able to decimate our foes while waiting for the reinforcements which our holy companion has gone to fetch."

On this, five of the warriors ventured outside the cave and provoked the enemy with cries, until a band of knights advanced towards them. Then they retreated into the cave's mouth, stationing themselves on each side of it.

It came to pass as Sharkan had predicted: each time the Christians stormed the cave they were seized and cut in two, so that not one of them returned to warn their comrades of the danger. More Christians were killed upon that day than on those which had gone before, because Allah blinded the eyes of the Unbelievers with darkness, and put strength into the heart of His servants.

Next morning the Christians took counsel together, saying: "This war will never cease until both sides are exterminated; therefore, instead of trying to storm the cave, let us surround it with our men and light dry wood against the entrance so that all the

enemy may be burnt alive. If, instead of being roasted, they prefer to surrender, we will lead them captive back to King Aphridonios in Constantinople; if they do not yield, let them become burning coals to feed the fires of hell. Christ smoke and curse them and their children after them, weaving their souls as a carpet for the feet of His children!"

They hastened to carry out what they had determined and, piling great loads of wood about the mouth of the cave, set fire to it.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Ninety-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MUSSULMANS were driven out by the great heat; they massed themselves into one close rank and leapt through the flames. Alas, blinded by smoke and fire they fell an easy prey to the Christians outside the cave and would have been put to death had not the leader of their enemies said: "Let us take them alive to Constantinople, where they may rejoice the king with their captivity and their death. Put chains about their necks and drag them behind your horses to the city."

The devoted few were bound with cords and put in charge of guards, while the whole Christian army sat down to celebrate their capture by eating and drinking. They drank so much that by midnight they fell to the earth in an impotence as of death.

Sharkan saw their bodies stretched all about him and said to his brother: "Is there no way of escape?" "Alas," answered Al-Makan, "I cannot see one, for we are caged up like birds." Sharkan sighed so deeply at this answer that he broke the cords about his breast and they fell to the ground. He leapt to his feet and cut the bonds of Dandan and Al-Makan. Then, taking from the chief guard the keys of the manacles which confined his ten soldiers, he set them free. Without loss of time the thirteen armed themselves with the weapons of the drunken Christians and fled noiselessly, thanking Allah in their hearts for their deliverance.

They soon reached the top of the mountain, where Sharkan halted them with these words: "Allah has blessed me with an idea. Let us separate and, scattering ourselves about these various peaks, cry with all our might: 'To Allah the victory!' The rocks of the mountains and the valleys shall multiply the sound, so that these drunken Infidels will think that our whole army is upon them, and will put each other to the sword in the panic of darkness."

At once his men carried out Sharkan's advice. Their voices fell sheer from the mountain tops, reverberating a thousand times from rock to rock in the darkness, so that the Christians sprang hastily and clumsily to arms, crying: "As Christ lives, the whole Mussulman army has come upon us!" Each man fought with his fellow until morning stopped the carnage, by which time the little band of Believers was far on its way towards Constantinople.

Towards the full light of morning, Sharkan's band saw a great cloud of dust advancing towards them, out of which voices cried: "To Allah the victory!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SOON THEY SAW clearly a Mussulman army with flying standards coming to meet them. The emirs Rustem and Bahraman were on horseback at its head and, in the midst of great waves of warriors, were borne banners on which appeared: "*There is no God but Allah! And Muhamad is His Prophet!*" Rustem and Bahraman threw themselves from their horses at the sight of the king and his companions and came forward to present their homage. Al-Makan asked them how all went with the army before the walls of Constantinople, and they answered: "The army is well and in good spirits; the grand-chamberlain sent us with twenty thousand men to come to your assistance." Al-Makan questioned them saying: "How did you know of our danger?" and they replied: "The saintly ascetic ran all day and night to inform us and to bid us haste. He is now in safety with the grand-chamberlain and encourages the Believers in their siege with many a holy discourse."

The two brothers rejoiced and gave thanks to Allah for the safety of their spiritual guide. They told the two emirs all that had happened at the monastery, adding: "The Unbelievers, who have been killing each other during the night, should now be in a tumult of fear at their mistake. Let us not lose an instant;

but fall upon them from the mountains, slay them, and recover our booty."

Al-Makan and Sharkan put themselves at the head of their new army and fell like thunderbolts upon the camp of the Christians, making play with sword and lance. At the end of that day there remained not one Infidel to return with the disastrous news to Constantinople.

When they were all dead, the Mussulmans divided the spoil and passed the night in rest and prayer and mutual congratulation.

At dawn Al-Makan determined to depart; so he said to the leaders of his army: "We must reach Constantinople as quickly as possible, because the grand-chamberlain must have been left with very few men; if the besieged find this out before we arrive, they may venture on a sortie and it will be an evil day for the grand-chamberlain."

Camp was struck and the whole troop set off towards Constantinople, while Al-Makan, who rode at their head, chanted this psalm, which he made up to the rhythm of his horse's feet:

*God is praise and glory;
Therefore glory and praise be unto Him
Who led me by the hand in stony places,
Who gave me a treasure of gold and a throne of gold
And set a sword of victory in my hand!*

*He covered the earth with the shadow of my kingdom,
And fed me when I was a stranger
Among strange peoples;
When I was lowly He accounted me
And He has bound my brow about with triumph.*

*His enemies fled before my face like cattle;
The Lord breathed upon them and they were not!*

*Not with the ferment of a generous wine,
But with death's evil grape
He has sent them drunken into the darkness.*

*We died, we died, in the battle,
But He has set us upon happy grass
Beside an eternal river of scented honey.*

As Al-Makan made an end of these glorifications, a black cloud which he perceived in front of him parted away, and wicked old Mother-of-Calamity appeared before him, still in the likeness of the holy ascetic.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID

ALL CLUSTERED ROUND to kiss her hands while she exclaimed in a tearful voice:

"I bring evil news, O people of the Prophet! Hasten, hasten! Your brothers outside the walls of Constantinople have been attacked in their tents by those they were besieging, and now flee in disorder. If you do not hasten to their assistance, the chamberlain and all his men will leave no trace that they have ever been."

Al-Makan and Sharkan felt themselves grow dizzy with the beatings of their hearts; in the extremity of their sorrow they knelt and kissed the feet of the messenger, while all their soldiers cried aloud in grief.

But the wazir Dandan did not do so. He kissed neither hand nor foot, but stayed on his horse and cried with a loud voice: "As Allah lives, O soldiers, my heart experiences a profound aversion from your remarkable saint; if it be a saint at all, it is a saint of hell! Take my advice and stay far off from such a sorcerer, and pay no attention to his words. Believe an old companion of the dead king and march forward without loss of time."

Sharkan replied to the wazir Dandan: "Put these unworthy suspicions behind you, my friend; they prove that you did not see, as I did, our holy father standing fearless amid the swords and lances of the enemy, so that he might give us his sacred encouragement. To blame a saint is to become unsaintly; and that he is a true saint, witness the love which Allah manifested in sustaining him amidst the tortures of the dungeon."

To back his words, Sharkan gave a vigorous and richly-harnessed mule to the ascetic, saying: "Mount this animal, O father, and walk no more upon your sacred feet." The treacherous old woman cried: "How can I rest while Believers lie dead without burial outside the walls of Constantinople?" She refused to mount the mule, but mingled with the foot-soldiers, marching with them and looking upon them as a fox which scents its prey. She recited verses from the Koran in a loud voice and made continuous prayers to the Merciful One until the broken remnants of the grand-chamberlain's army appeared in sight.

Al-Makan called the chamberlain to him and asked for details of the disaster; and the latter, his face undone by grief told him what had happened.

Now the Mussulman defeat had been brought about by Mother-of-Calamity. When the emirs Rustem and Bahraman, commanding the Turks and Kurds, had gone to the help of the two kings, the army which remained outside Constantinople found itself so weakened that the chamberlain dared not speak of his numbers to one of his men for fear that one should be a traitor. But the old woman, knowing that the moment had come for which she had planned and plotted with so much care and fortitude, hailed one of the officers upon the walls and bade him drop down a cord to her. When this was done she attached the following letter to it:

“This from the subtle, the inventive, the terrible Mother-of-Calamity, acknowledged the supreme scourge of east and west, to Aphridonios, the King whom Christ defend!

“And after!

“Tranquillity shall soon light again upon your heart, for I have laid a snare which shall destroy the last of the Mussulmans. Al-Makan, his brother Sharkan, the wazir Dandan, and the remnant of the troop with which they pillaged the monastery of Matruna, are captive and in chains; and I have managed to weaken the army before your walls by persuading the grand-chamberlain to send two great bands to help their chief in the valley. When they reach that place, these bands will be destroyed by the victorious soldiers of Christ.

“It remains only for you to make a sortie with all your men against the besiegers; to burn their tents, and hack the last man of them in pieces. Christ, our Lord, and his Virgin Mother, will help you to do this; and will also one day reward me for all that I have done in Their service.”

Aphridonios read this letter with joy; and sent at once for King Hardobios, who had taken refuge in Constantinople with his Cesarean troops.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HARDOBIOS READ this letter with proud satisfaction, crying: “O king, be astonished at the excellent ruses of my old nurse! She has been more useful to us than all our armies; our foes have but to see her and they are more terrified than they will be by all the devils in hell on the Day of Judgment.” Aphridonios answered: “May Christ never remove this invaluable woman from among us; may He make fruitful all her crooked plans within her.”

Aphridonios gave the order, and his whole army belched through the gate of Constantinople; brandishing their swords, invoking the cross, cursing, blaspheming and madly bellowing. When he saw them, the chamberlain understood his danger. He called his men to arms, crying: “Trust in your faith,

O Mussulmans; if you retreat you are lost, if you stand firm you will win the day. Courage is but patience which endures for a moment, and there is no path which Allah cannot make large enough for His servants. I call upon the Highest to bless you!"

At this the courage of the Believers knew no bounds; against the invocations of Christ they hurled invocations of Allah; and the two armies came terribly to grips. Good angels fought on our side, bad angels on the other; blood sprang out in streams, heads encumbered the ground; heroes and cowards proved themselves; some killed, and some fell backwards from horses, which walked up to their heads between the piles of the slain. But what could heroism do against numbers? By nightfall the Mussulmans were in retreat, their tents were sacked, and their camp was in the hands of the enemy.

In plain flight they met the victorious army of Al-Makan, returning from the defeat of the Christians in the valley. Sharkan congratulated the chamberlain in a loud voice before all his officers on the heroic stand which he had made, the wisdom of his retreat, and his patience under adversity. The arms of Islam, reunited once more and thirsting for vengeance, made haste towards Constantinople. When the Christians saw them coming, bearing banners on which were inscribed the Words of the Faith, they turned to the colour of saffron, tearfully invoked Christ, Mary, Anna, and the Cross; and prayed their patriarchs and infamous priests to intercede on their behalf with the saints of glory.

The Mussulman army came under the walls of the city and would have prepared for battle; but Sharkan found out his brother and said: "King of time, it is certain that the Christians will not refuse the battle

and we, we long for it. I give you this advice, seeing that method is the essence of order. Place me in the centre in front of the enemy, Dandan on the right centre, the emir Torkash on the left centre, Rustem on the right wing, and Bahraman on the left wing. I would suggest that you, my king, stay under the protection of the great standard and keep an eye upon all sections, since you are our only support, save Allah. Thus the whole army will serve you as a shield." Al-Makan thanked his brother for his advice and set out the line of battle as he had suggested.

Hardly was each man in his place than a rapid rider spurred from the Christian army and approached that of the Mussulmans. He was a handsome and venerable old man with a white beard, wearing a white linen mantle and mounted upon a fast mule with a white silk saddle covered by a cashmere carpet. He came near to Al-Makan and said: "I carry a message and, being an intermediary, I claim safety and a hearing." "Speak without fear," said Sharkan. The messenger dismounted and, taking a cross from about his neck, gave it to Sharkan, saying: "I come on the part of King Aphridonios, who has listened to my counsels and agreed that this disastrous war should cease before all God's creatures are destroyed by it. I come to propose a single combat between King Aphridonios and Prince Sharkan."

"Return, old man, to your king," answered the prince, "and tell him that Sharkan is ready for the test. Tomorrow morning, when we have rested from our long march, I will fight with him; and if I am conquered my people will retire as best they may."

At this answer, which the old man brought back to him, Aphridonios was in the seventh heaven of joy, for he felt certain of killing Sharkan and had made all

his preparations to that end. He passed all night in eating, drinking, and praying; and, when morning dawned, rode out into the middle of the plain, dressed in a coat of gold mail in whose centre shone a jewelled mirror, and mounted upon a tall war-horse. He held a long curved sabre in his hand, and there hung from his shoulders a bow fashioned after the complicated manner of the West. When he came near the ranks of his enemies, he lifted up his voice, crying: "Behold me! He who knows me, knows me and trembles; he who knows me not, shall soon learn. I am King Aphridonios and there are blessings upon my head!"

Scarcely had he spoken, when Prince Sharkan thundered towards him on an Arab horse worth more than a thousand pieces of red gold. His saddle was brocaded with pearls and diamonds; and his sword, which was of Indian steel chased with gold, could have cut through all common blades and split the hardest things which God has made. He charged Aphridonios, crying: "On guard, you dog! Do you think that I am a youth with a girl's skin, rising from a harlot's bed to do you battle? This is my sign, O Infidel!" With that he cut terribly with his sword, so that Aphridonios only saved himself by pulling his horse aside. The foemen met like two mountains or two seas coming to battle; they retired and advanced and circled; and advanced and retired; they gave blows and parried blows, under the eyes of the two armies, which cried aloud for their champions until the sun set upon a bloodless field.

At the moment when its red edge was sinking from sight, Aphridonios cried out suddenly to Sharkan: "Look behind you, in Christ's name, O champion of defeat, O hero of retreat; they are bringing you a

fresh horse while mine is wearied. This is the practice of slaves, not of warriors.”

Sharkan raged at this, and turned to see what horse the Christian meant, but here was nothing there. It was a trick: the Christian hurled his javelin full at Sharkan's back. The prince cried a terrible cry and fell back on his saddle and Aphridonios galloped back to his own people, leaving his gallant foe for dead.

When the Mussulmans saw their prince fall with his face against his saddle, they ran out to his help.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FIRST TO COME to him were Dandan, Rustem, and Bahraman. They lifted him in their arms and carried him to the tent of his brother, King Al-Makan, who raged and grieved. Physicians were called who attended to Sharkan, while the people wept and stood all night about the hero's couch.

Towards morning the holy ascetic came near the bed of the wounded man and, after reading certain verses of the Koran over him, laid on his hands. Sharkan gave a long sigh and opened his eyes. His first words were of thanks to the Merciful for his life; then to Al-Makan he said: “I was wounded by a trick, but the hurt is not mortal. Where is my ascetic?” “Here by your bed,” said Al-Makan; and Sharkan kissed the hands of the old dissembler, who prayed for

his recovery, saying: "My son, be patient under your pain, and Allah will reward you."

Al-Makan, who had been absent for a little time, returned to the tent and kissed his brother, and the hands of the ascetic, saying: "Dear brother, may Allah have you in His keeping. I go forth now to avenge you by crushing this dog, this son of a dog, this Aphridonios." Sharkan tried to stay him; and the wazir Dandan, the two emirs, and the chamberlain all offered to go themselves to destroy the Infidel, but Al-Makan was already in the saddle. "By the wells of Zamzam, the vengeance is mine!" he cried, and spurred into the middle of the plain. If you had seen him, you would have thought that he was Antar upon his black horse, which was quicker than the wind, quicker than the light of the sun.

Aphridonios rode out to meet him and the two champions met with a crash in this last and mortal fight. With a strength which was increased a hundredfold by his lust for vengeance, Al-Makan, after certain feints, crashed with his blade against the neck of Aphridonios, severing the helmet, the flesh, and the spine; so that the head itself bounded upon the ground.

As if this had been a signal, the Mussulmans charged with a noise as of thunder upon the Christians and killed fifty thousand of them before the shades of night allowed the remnant to flee back into Constantinople. The gates were closed against the victors to whom Allah had given such a splendid recompense.

The hosts of the Believers returned to their tents laden with their spoil and the officers congratulated Al-Makan, who gave up thanks to the Highest for his victory. When he informed Sharkan of all that had taken place, the prince felt his heart beat healthily

once more and his body enter into the way of healing. To Al-Makan he said: "The victory is surely due to the prayers of this holy ascetic, who has not ceased to invoke the blessing of Heaven upon our arms.

The wicked old woman could not help changing colour when she heard of the death of Aphridonios, so that from yellow she became green and tears stifled her. Nevertheless she had enough control to make her tears appear tears of joy. In her dark heart she plotted a burning grief for Al-Makan. As had been her custom, she applied on that day also pastes and balms to the wound of Sharkan and, when she had dressed it with great care, commanded every one to leave the tent that he might sleep. Soon Sharkan was left alone with his evil nurse.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHARKAN SLEPT, the vile old woman, who had been watching him like a she-wolf or a mad viper, glided terribly towards him, drawing a poisoned knife from beneath her clothing. The bane upon its blade was of such frightful combination that a drop of it would have split a granite boulder. The old woman stretched forth her calamitous hand and cut off Sharkan's head. Thus died, by the force of Destiny and the machinations of Eblis gowned in the body of an old woman, Sharkan, son of Omar Al-Neman, the

champion of the Faith, the hero who shall not be forgotten.

The old woman, whose vengeance was now satisfied, left, near the severed head, the following letter:

“This from the noble Al-Dawahi, known because of her exploits as Mother-of-Calamity, to those Mussulmans at present in Christian territory.

“It was I who had the satisfaction of killing Omar Al-Neman in the midst of his palace; it was I who caused your rout and extermination in the valley below the monastery; and it is I who have, with my own hand, as a fitting end to all my strategies, cut off the head of Sharkan. With heaven’s help, I hope some day to cut off the heads of King Al-Makan and his wazir Dandan.

“It is for the rest of you to reflect whether you will do better to stay in our land or to return to your own. Whichever you decide, you will never gain the end which you have in view; and I warn you that if you stay before Constantinople, my arm and the labyrinths of my wit shall, with Christ’s help, destroy you every one.”

Leaving this letter, the old woman slipped from the tent and re-entered the city to inform the Christians of her fatal acts. Then she entered the church and prayed, weeping for the death of King Aphridonios, and thanking her master, the Devil, because the proud spirit of Sharkan had passed away.

At the same hour on which the murder was committed, the wazir Dandan felt himself oppressed by sleeplessness and foreboding. It seemed to him that the whole weight of the earth lay upon his chest, so he

decided to leave his couch. He quitted his tent and, as he walked up and down refreshing himself with the night air, he saw far off the ascetic hurrying away from the camp. He therefore said to himself: "Prince Sharkan will be alone; I will go and watch by him, or talk to him if he is awake."

When he reached Sharkan's tent, the first thing he saw was a pool of blood upon the ground and the second and third were the head and body of Sharkan lying separate upon the bed.

Dandan gave so great and terrible a cry that all the sleepers woke and jumped to their feet, the army was in an uproar, and Al-Makan ran into the tent. He saw his wazir Dandan weeping by the lifeless body of his brother; he cried: "O terror, terror!" and fell along the ground in a deathlike swoon.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR AND THE EMIRS clustered round him and fanned him with their robes until he came to himself, crying: "Sharkan, brother, hero! What devil has made this foul defeat upon your life?" Nothing was heard for a space except the weeping and sobbing of Al-Makan, Dandan, Rustem, Bahraman, and the grand-chamberlain; but suddenly the wazir saw the letter lying by the head and read it aloud to Al-Makan, saying: "Now, O king, you may know why

that ascetic so displeased me!" Al-Makan cried through his tears: "As Allah lives, I will take that old woman with my own hands, I will pour boiling lead into the funnel of her sex, I will thrust a spiked stake up her behind, I will hang her by the hair, and nail her living to the gate of Constantinople."

The king decreed a splendid funeral for Sharkan and followed the body weeping until it was buried at the foot of a hill under a great dome of alabaster and gold.

For long days he let his tears fall, until he was but a shadow; so the wazir Dandan, curbing his own grief, came to him, saying: "O king, dry your eyes, if that be possible, and place a balm of fortitude upon your grief. Your brother now lives between the hands of Peace, tasting Reward. He has gone through that door which was written for him, and your grieving may not bring him back. Rise up and take your arms again: let the siege go on, for that way lies revenge."

While Dandan was encouraging the king in this sort, a courier arrived from Baghdad, bearing this letter from Nuzhat to Al-Makan:

"Good news, my brother!

"Your young slave has safely borne you a man-child, who shines like the moon in Ramadan. I have thought well to call him Kanmakan, He Was What He Was.

"Astronomers predict memorable deeds for the child, because his birth was accompanied by prodigies and marvels. I have had prayer and intercession made in all the mosques for you, and for your child, and for your victory over the enemy.

"We are all well here; especially your friend the fireman, who luxuriates in peace and pleasure, but ardently desires news of you as do we all.

“There have been abundant rains this year and the harvests should be excellent.

“Peace and safety be with you and about you.”

Al-Makan gave a deep breath when he read this letter, and cried: “O wazir, now that Allah has blessed me with a son, little Kanmakan, my grief is lessened and my heart begins to live again. Let us worthily celebrate the end of mourning for my dead brother.” “I think that you are right,” answered the wazir. Great tents were pitched about the tomb of Sharkan for the imams and readers of the Koran; a quantity of sheep and camels were slain and divided among the army; and all the night was passed in prayer.

Next morning Al-Makan walked slowly towards the tomb, which was all covered with precious stuffs from Persia and Kashmir. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE WALKED SLOWLY towards the tomb, which was all covered with precious stuffs from Persia and Kashmir and, weeping in the presence of the whole army improvised these verses:

*The lines of tears upon my cheeks rehearse,
Weeping for Sharkan,
A sorrow more significant than verse,
Sharkan, my brother.*

*Louder than Moses' voice breaking the rocks,
Breaking for Sharkan
Your soldiers' cries are. And the echo mocks
Sharkan, my brother.*

*Deep have we dug the grave for you, dear sleeper,
Dug it for Sharkan;
But our hearts' graves are emptier and deeper,
Sharkan, my brother.*

*I had not thought to see my spirit married,
Married to Sharkan,
Death-wed and lifted up and shoulder-carried,
Sharkan, my brother.*

*Where is the fiery star of Sharkan now.
The star of Sharkan?
Weary, empty, and black the storm-clouds bow,
Sharkan, my brother.*

*Dark of the tomb is lighted with the rare
Topaz of Sharkan;
Earth hides him in her bosom and is fair,
Sharkan, my brother.*

*The winding silk shall start to crimson wings,
Bearing up Sharkan,
And carry to the herb-garden of kings
Sharkan, my brother.*

When Al-Makan had made an end, he wept again and all the army sighed. Then came the wazir Dandan to throw himself upon Sharkan's tomb. He kissed the stone and, in a voice strangled by tears, intoned this song of the poet.

*Wise to have gone so early to reward,
Child of the sword;
Wise with a single new-bathed eagle's flight
To have touched the white
Wild roses spread for feet in paradise.
Ah, my son, wise
Soon to have drained the new and bitter cup
Which, once drunk up,
Leads straightway to an old immortal wine
Pressed from God's vine.*

Such was the end of mourning for Sharkan.

Nevertheless, Al-Makan continued to be sad, especially as the siege of Constantinople threatened to drag on into many months. One day he opened his heart to his wazir Dandan, saying: "What can I do to forget my griefs, and drive away the weariness which weighs upon my soul?"

"O king," answered the wazir, "I know of but one remedy, and that is that I should tell you a story of time past and famous kings. I will find no difficulty in doing this, as my chief occupation under the reign of your dead father, Omar Al-Neman, was to distract his nights with delicious story, with the songs of the Arab poets, and my own improvisations. Tonight when all the camp is asleep I will tell you a tale which will make you marvel, and ease your breast with delight. You will find the siege go quickly. I shall only tell you the title of my story now; it is: *The Tale of Two Lovers, Aziz and Aziza.*"

Al-Makan felt his heart beating with impatience. He had no other desire than to see the evening come when he might hear the promised tale; for the simple title of it made him tremble with pleasure.

Hardly had night begun to fall when Al-Makan had

all the torches lighted in his tent and all the lanterns lighted in the silken corridor. He caused a service to be laid of food and drink; with braziers of incense, amber, and other aromatics. He assembled the emirs Bahraman, Rustem, and Torkash, and Nuzhat's husband, the grand-chamberlain. When they were seated he called the wazir Dandan and said to him: "O wazir, night spreads over our heads her dark majestic robe and her black hair. We wait for your promised story that we may rejoice."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR DANDAN answered: "With all my heart and as in duty bound; for you must know, O auspicious king, that the tale which I am going to tell you of those things which came to Aziz and Aziza is specially designed to drive away all grief and to console a sorrow greater than Jacob's."

THE TALE OF AZIZ AND AZIZA, AND OF PRINCE DIADEM

There was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a city called Green City, behind the mountains of Ispahan in Persia. Its king, Sulayman Shah, was dowered with the gifts of justice, generosity, prudence, and learning; so that travellers journeyed from all countries

towards his city, and his good fame so spread abroad that merchants with their caravans put trust in his equity.

For many years he governed prosperously surrounded by the love of all his people, but one thing he lacked, the joy of wife and children.

One day his loneliness weighed upon him more than ever, so he called to him his wazir, who followed in his master's way of goodness and generosity, and said to him: "My breast narrows, my patience flows away, my strength diminishes; a little longer and I shall be nothing but skin and bone. I see that to live alone is not an estate of nature for any man, and least of all for a king who has a throne to leave. Also our Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) has said: 'Couple and multiply, for your numbers will be my pride in the Resurrection.' Advise me, O wazir."

Then said the wazir: "It is a difficult and delicate question. I shall attempt to satisfy you without transgressing the path of propriety. It would be a great grief to me to see some unknown slave married to my king; for we could know nothing of her ancestry and the blood-stream of the king's fathers might be polluted. A child born from such a union always turns out vicious, lying, and cruel; one already marked out by Allah's displeasure from his birth. Such a foundation for a line of kings is like a plant growing in marshy ground, feeding on stagnant and brackish water, which rots as it grows. Therefore I pray you, do not command your wazir to buy you a slave-girl, even though she were the fairest in the world, for he could not bear the weight of such a sin. If you will listen to the advice of my beard, you will choose a king's daughter of known pedigree, whose beauty shall

be an example and exasperation to all the women of the kingdom."

Sulayman Shah answered: "I am more than ready, if you can find me such a woman, to marry her and bring down on my posterity the blessings of Allah." Then said the wazir: "Thanks be to Him, she is already found." "How is that?" cried the king; and the wazir replied: "My wife has told me that Zahr Shah, king of White City, has a daughter, who is so beautiful that my tongue would become hairy before I could give you least idea of her charms." "Ya Allah!" cried the king; and the wazir continued: "I could never speak worthily of her eyes with their lids of tender brown, of her hair, of her waist so thin that one may scarcely see it, of her heavy hips, of those things which bear these up and of those which increase in curved loveliness about them. As Allah lives, none may come near her without being suddenly stricken into immobility, and none may regard her without dying. A poet has written of her:

*Her belly's concord can make slaves,
Her waist might take for its device
The thin green flags the willow waves
Or "As the poplars grow in paradise."*

*There is wild honey on her lips,
She drinks and sweetens all the wine;
Two stars have gone to their eclipse
When her bold eyes leap wanton into mine."*

At the repetition of this song the king started for joy and cried: "Ya Allah!" with his full throat. The wazir continued: "My advice is that you should at once send to Zahr Shah one chosen from among your

emirs for confidential tact; a man whose experience is already known, one who savours the exact meaning of words before he utters them. He will persuade the king to give you his daughter in marriage and thus you will be able to live in accordance with the words of the Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!): 'Let the chaste be driven forth from Islam, for they corrupt the people. Let there be no abstention from women among the priests of Islam.' Besides, the girl is worthy of you, being the fairest gem upon this earth or below it."

Sulayman Shah felt his heart swell with pleasure at these last words; he sighed for joy and said to his wazir: "What man could I choose better than you for so delicate an undertaking? Rise up now; say your good-byes and complete your businesses, for you must leave at once for White City. My heart will be in a ferment until you return."

The wazir finished all at his house which needed finishing and embraced all whom it was fitting for him to embrace. Then he charged mules and camels with cases containing gifts such as are meet for kings: jewels and the work of goldsmiths, silk carpets, embroidered fabrics, perfumes, pure essence of roses, and all light things whose price is heavy; with swords damascened with gold having hilts of rubied jade, arms of light steel and gilded coats of mail; the thousand nothings which melt pleasantly in the mouths of girls, rose jam, slivers of apricot, perfumed conserves, and almond-paste aromatic with benzoin from the warm islands; and collecting, first ten chosen horses of pure Arab stock, and then a hundred young mamelukes, a hundred negro youths, and a hundred maidens to be attendant on the returning bride, gave the signal for departure. As the caravan was setting off, Sulay-

man Shah stopped him for a moment, saying: "I warn you not to return without the girl, and I charge you to make haste; for I shall be burning night and day because of my bride." The wazir reassured him and left the city with his caravan. He journeyed night and day, up hill and down valley, across streams and rivers, by desert and sown, until he came within a day's journey of White City. While he rested with his people beside a pleasant water-course, he sent forward a rapid rider to announce his arrival to Zahr Shah.

The king was taking the air in one of his gardens near the city gate, and saw the courier as he rode up to the sentinels. Recognising him as a stranger, he sent for him and asked him who he was. The messenger answered: "I am sent by the wazir of King Sulayman Shah, master of Green City and the mountains of Ispahan. The wazir is camped even now beside a river which is near your capital."

Zahr Shah was delighted at this news and, after giving all refreshment to the courier, sent one of his emirs to meet the representatives of a king whom he so much respected.

The wazir of Sulayman Shah rested by the river until midnight. Then he set out towards the city, coming to its gates at sunrise.

He had just finished urinating, and had given the ewer to one of his slaves after washing himself, when he saw the wazir, chamberlains, and emirs of Zahr Shah coming towards him. So, remounting his horse, he spurred forward and, after the most polite salutations on either side, entered White City with his hosts.

When he was led into the main hall of the palace, he saw a tall throne of white diaphanous marble incrustured with diamonds and borne up upon four legs

so great that each might have protected an elephant from its enemies. On this throne was a huge cushion of green watered silk with tassels, fringes, and balls of red gold. Above the throne was a canopy, flaming with gold and bright with ivory; and upon the throne sat Zahr Shah in the midst of still guards, expectant for his orders.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE WAZIR of King Sulayman Shah saw the glory of these things, he felt inspiration descend upon his soul and eloquence inciting his tongue to polished discourse; so, with an agreeable gesture, he turned to the king and improvised these stanzas in his honour:

*My heart leaps from my breast to you,
I sacrifice my rest to you,
Nor will my pride be satisfied
Until my lips are pressed to you.*

*When first my eyes confessed to you
The homage they addressed to you,
My longing gaze and weeping ways
Seemed little more than jest to you.*

*Or if my death seems best to you,
Or if my life gives zest to you,
I'll die indeed or try indeed
To be a loving guest to you.*

The wazir fell silent; and Zahr Shah, smiling benevolently upon him, made him sit down beside him and greeted him as a friend. A meal was served in honour of the wazir, and when all had eaten and drunken until they were satisfied, the king dismissed his court, only retaining his chamberlains and his own grand-wazir.

The envoy of King Sulayman Shah rose to his feet and bowed, saying: "King of munificence, my errand will result in blessing and happiness to all concerned. I ask your modest and delightful daughter in marriage for my master, Sulayman Shah, the glorious king of Green City and the mountains of Ispahan. I bear rich gifts to prove the impatience of my lord, and would hear your own mouth speak of the affair."

Zahr Shah rose and bowed to the earth, to the astonishment of his chamberlains, who saw their king showing such honour to a simple wazir. Still standing, the sultan said: "Tactful, learned, and eloquent wazir, listen to what I say. I hold myself to be nothing more than a subject of Sulayman Shah, though now honoured above all other subjects by alliance with him. My daughter is but one of his slaves; from this hour she belongs to him in absolute possession. This is my answer to our master, lord of Green City and the mountains of Ispahan."

He sent for the kadis and for witnesses; when they had drawn up the marriage contract between his daughter and King Sulayman Shah, the sultan kissed the contract and received the congratulations of the kadis. He bestowed gifts on all the witnesses and gave both feasts and festivals in honour of the wazir, so that his people rejoiced: and the more so when food and money were distributed to rich and poor alike.

He chose out slaves for his daughter, Greeks and Turks, black and white; and had a palanquin con-

structed for her of solid gold set with pearls, which should be carried by ten chosen mules. The convoy set out in the light of morning; the palanquin shining like a palace of fairies, and the veiled girl within it seeming like a houri sent straight from Paradise.

The king himself accompanied the procession for three parasangs and then, saying farewell to his daughter and to the wazir, returned to White City, filled with great joy and confidence for the future.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE WAZIR'S party had come safely to within three days' march of Green City, he sent a mounted messenger forward to tell his king the news.

Sulayman Shah trembled with pleasure when he heard that his bride was so near and gave the courier a costly robe of honour. Then, at the head of all his army, he set out with flying banners to meet the maiden; and all the city went out with him, so that neither woman nor child nor impotent beldame remained behind. When the two parties met, it was decided that the entry into our city should take place ceremoniously at nightfall.

As soon as the sun set, the nobles of the city had all the road which led to the king's palace illuminated at their own expense. The city stood in two ranks along the way and the soldiers made a hedge on either hand.

Coloured lights broke and flashed in the quiet air, great drums boomed, the trumpets cried, flags lapped lazily above the heads of the procession, perfumes were burned in braziers at the street corners, and in all open spaces picked warriors jousted with lance and javelin. With negroes and mamelukes in front of her, with slaves and attendant women behind her, the bride, hidden by the costly gifts of her father, came to the palace of her husband.

The young slaves unharnessed the mule and carried the palanquin on their shoulders to the secret door, cheered loudly by the people and soldiery. There women met the bride and led her into the marriage-chamber, where it appeared as if the lights were doubled, or that a moon was there with attendant stars, or that a single pearl lay in a plate of gold. When they had couched her on a bed of ivory, they left her; and formed a path of living stars between which the king came to his own, prepared, perfect, and perfumed upon the bed. At that hour Allah lit a great love in the heart of Sulayman Shah and also gave him the dear devotion of his bride. He took her virginity in happiness and forgot between her legs and in her arms all his impatience and the pain of love-longing.

The queen conceived upon that first night and for a whole month the king lived with her in her apartment, because they loved each other.

At the end of that time, Sulayman Shah mounted his throne and attended to the justice of his kingdom and the good of his people, but when evening came he went to visit his wife and failed not to do so every night until the ninth month.

On the last night of that month the queen was overtaken by her pains and sat upon the chair of bearing.

At dawn Allah eased her birth, so that she brought into the world a man-child carrying all the signs of luck and fortune.

The king was happier than ever in his life before when he heard the news of this birth; he gave rich gifts to the one who told him and then, running to the queen, took the infant in his arms and kissed him between the eyes. Then it was that he saw how applicable were these verses of the poet to his first-born:

*God sent a small but complete star
Into the darkness where we are:
Nurses with splendid delicate teats,
Accustom not his forces
To your slim backs, whose future seats
Are lions and wild horses.
Nurses with milk too white and sweet,
Wean him as soon as may be;
Red blood of kings shall be the meat
To feed this lusty baby:
Into the darkness where we are
God sent a small but complete star.*

Nurses took care of the new born, the midwives cut his cord and lengthened his eyes with black kohl. Such was the birth of a son to a king among kings and a queen among queens; and he shone so fair that they called him Diadem-of-Blandishment.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE WAS BROUGHT up amidst kisses and the fairest breasts, while the years passed by. When he was seven, his father called together the wisest professors of caligraphy, literature, deportment, syntax, and civil law, who stayed with the child and taught him these things until he was fourteen. After he had learnt all that his father wished, he was given a master among riding-masters, who taught him horsemanship, lance play, the conduct of the javelin, and the art of hawking for deer. It was not long before Prince Diadem became the most accomplished cavalier of his time; he was already so beautiful that, whether he went out on foot or on horseback, those who saw him were damned for their thoughts.

By the time he was fifteen, his charms were the main theme for the most loving verses of the poets, while the chastest of philosophers felt their hearts and livers confounded by the seduction of his presence. An amorous poet wrote this about him:

*Musk kisses,
To faint under musk,
To feel his body bend like a wet branch
That has eaten of the West wind and drunk dew.*

*Musk kisses,
To madden without wine;
Should I not know, who get drunk each sunset
With the musk, musk, musk wine of his mouth?*

*Musk kisses,
Beauty looked into his mirror at morning
And turned from her own shadow
To love the musk, musk, musk of his nakedness.*

This when he was only fifteen! When he was eighteen it was the same thing, only increased a thousandfold. A young down shadowed his cheek's flesh of roses and black amber had sketched a beauty spot on the whiteness of his chin. He ravished both sight and reason, even as a poet has said of him:

*Boast, if you will, the magic chance
Which took you safely through the fire;
A greater wonder I require
If you would parallel that glance
Of jet,
Which has not harmed me yet.*

*You tell me other cheeks can show
Soft down as they approach a man's;
Not so the cheeks of my romance,
For that which I see over-grow
Their milk
Is ghost of gilded silk.*

*When we converse of magic streams
Replete with youth-returning springs;
You tell me there are no such things;
And I am credulous it seems;
Yet I
Would venture this reply:*

*The spring of youth's delightful joy
Myself have tasted where it slips
For ever from the dark red lips
Of a slim-waisted deer-swift boy
My tongue
Remembers and is young.*

This when he was only eighteen! When he was a man, **his name** was used as a symbol for beauty wherever Allah is worshipped. He had a multitude of friends and intimates who longed to see him some day reign over the kingdom as he already reigned in their hearts.

In this period of his young manhood, Prince Diadem was passionately fond of hunting and roving through the forests, though his continuous absences were a source of anxiety to his father and mother. One day he ordered his slaves to prepare provisions for ten days and set out with his hunters; arriving at the end of the fourth day at a heavily-wooded district rich in game, filled with all sorts of savage beasts, and watered by a multitude of streams.

The prince gave the signal for a hunt and a great net was spread round an area covered with small trees. The beaters worked inwards towards the centre, driving the frightened animals before them. Then panthers, dogs, and hawks were set free to chase the swifter prey, and a multitude of gazelles and other light game were taken. In truth, there was a feast for the panthers, dogs, and hawks. When the hunt was over, Diadem sat down to rest beside a river, while the game was divided and the finest of it kept for King Sulayman Shah. He slept by the river that night till dawn.

As soon as the prince's hunters woke, they saw that a large caravan had arrived in the night and camped near them; both black slaves and many merchants were seen leaving the tents and coming down to make their ablutions in the river. Diadem sent one of his men to ask the merchants who they were. The huntsmen returned with this answer: "We are merchants who have camped here, attracted by the greenery and fair water of the place. We knew that we had nothing

to fear, because we are now in the secure lands of Sulayman Shah, whose reputation for wise government is a balm to the natural fears of travellers! We feel all the safer since we carry rich and numerous presents to that admirable young man, Prince Diadem."

Hearing this, the handsome prince exclaimed: "By Allah, if these merchants have some present for me, why should we not go down and take delivery of it ourselves? That would be an amusing way of passing the morning." Without delay the young man called his huntsmen together and went to visit the caravan.

The merchants saw the king's son coming and recognised him, so they ran to meet him and invited him to honour their encampment. With great celerity they pitched a red satin tent of honour, pictured with birds and animals in many colours, and set a magnificent cushion within it on a silken carpet, whose borders were fringed with flawless emeralds. The prince sat upon the carpet and leaned against the cushion, asking the traders to undo their merchandise before him. They did so and he bought all the things which pleased him, obliging them to accept a full price although they many times refused.

He sent his purchases away to his own camp by slaves and was about to remount his horse when his eyes singled out from the merchants a young man of exceeding beauty and attractive pallor, dressed richly and in taste.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THIS YOUTH'S FACE, though it was pale and beautiful, carried the imprint of great sadness, as if he had lost a father, a mother, or a dear friend.

Prince Diadem did not want to go away until he had made his acquaintance, for he felt his heart drawn to him. Instead of riding, therefore, he approached and wishing the young man peace, asked him who he was and why he was so sad. The boy's eyes filled with tears, and saying for sole answer: "I am Aziz," he burst into such a storm of sobs that a swoon came upon him and he fell to the ground.

As soon as he came to himself, Prince Diadem said: "I am your friend, Aziz; tell me the reason of your great grief." For only answer, young Aziz leaned upon his elbow and sang:

*There's a black Magus in her eyes
And, if you miss his spell,
There's a gold bowman there as well—
An arrow flies.*

*There's wine of fire within her voice,
And you, who will not hear,
May still be taken unaware
By two red toys.*

*Between neck-gold and ankle-gold
So fair is to be seen
That half the valleys in between
May not be told.*

*There are perfumes on her silken gown,
But if their power were spent
You could not miss the roses' scent
Which is her own.*

Prince Diadem was so affected by this song that he did not wish to insist any further, but changed the mark of his conversation, saying: "Tell me, Aziz, why you did not exhibit your merchandise like the other traders?" "My lord," answered the youth, "my scrip has nothing in it worthy of a king's son." "Nevertheless I would see what you have," said the prince; and Aziz was obliged to sit by him on the carpet and show piece by piece the goods which he had with him. Diadem did not examine the fabrics, but straightway bought them all, saying: "Now tell me why you are sad, my Aziz. If any oppresses you, I know how to punish him; if any holds you in debt, I shall cheerfully pay him, because I feel my bowels moved towards you."

Young Aziz could only sob in reply to these words, and passionately sing:

*"Black eyes with blue kohl length,
White breasts with red coal tips,
Wine-coloured lips with honey strength,
A happiness of hips,
Black night where grope
The lips of hope
Towards a white eclipse."*

The prince's emotion was so great on hearing this song, that, to hide it, he began to examine the silks and fabrics one by one. Suddenly a doubled square of embroidered silk fell from between his hands.

Young Aziz pounced on this and, folding it with shaking hands, hid it below his knees; then he cried:

*“Easier to clasp the Pleiades,
Aziza,
Or further stars than these
Than clasp Aziza.*

*Hard to roll earth up heaven’s hill,
Aziza,
But it is harder still
To leave Aziza.”*

When the prince saw the quick movement of Aziz and heard his song, he was extremely astonished, and cried. . . .

At this point in her tale, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent. Then her sister, Doniazade, said: “Sister, your words are sweet and gentle and pleasant to the taste.” And Shahrazade answered: “Indeed, they are nothing to that which I would tell both of you tomorrow night, if I were still alive and the king thought good to spare me.” On this, the king said to himself: “By Allah, I will not kill her until I have heard the rest of her truly astonishing tale.”

Then the king and Shahrazade passed the rest of the night in each other’s arms, until the king departed to sit in judgment. When he saw the wazir approach, carrying under his arm the winding sheet destined for his daughter Shahrazade, whom he believed already dead, the king said nothing to him, but continued to administer justice, raising some to office and debasing

others, until the fall of day. So that the wazir was plunged into perplexity and the extreme of astonishment.

When night came, King Shahryar went to Shahrazade in her apartment and did his ordinary with her.

*It Was
The Hundred-and-twelfth Night*

LITTLE DONIAZADE rose from her carpet when the affair was over, and said to Shahrazade: "Sister, I pray you continue your charming tale of the handsome prince and of Aziz and Aziza, which Dandan told to King Al-Makan under the walls of Constantinople."

To this Shahrazade answered smiling: "With all my heart and as my duty is, if our excellent and well-bred king permits." Then King Shahryar, who could not sleep for anxiety to know the rest of the tale, said: "You may speak."

And Shahrazade said:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that Prince Diadem cried: "What are you hiding there, Aziz?" Aziz replied: "My lord, it was because of this thing that I did not wish you to see my merchandise. What shall I do now?" He heaved a heavy sigh; but the prince pressed him so gently, that at last he said:

"My master, the story of my life, which is bound about this double square, is a very strange one and full of sweet memories for me. The charms of those who gave me the two pieces will never fade before my eyes. One side was given to me by Aziza; and the other by one whose name would be bitter on my lips; for the latter made me even what I am. Now that I have be-

gun to tell you of these things, you shall hear all; for the tale should be so pleasant and edifying to one who hears it in the right spirit."

Aziz took the stuff from beneath his knees and unfolded it on the carpet, so that the prince could examine the two separate squares: on one of them, embroidered in silk with red-gold threads and rainbow-coloured threads, was a gazelle; on the other square was a second gazelle, worked in silver thread and carrying about its neck a red collar from which depended three Eastern chrysolites.

Seeing the excellent work of these gazelles, the prince cried: "Glory be to Him Who has given such art to His creatures! O Aziz, in pity hasten to tell me the tale of Aziza and the woman of the second gazelle." Aziz said to the prince:

"Know, dear my lord. . . ."

THE END OF THE TALE OF KING OMAR AL-NEMAN

THE TALE OF AZIZ AND AZIZA

*(Told by Aziz in the tale of Aziz and Aziza, and of
Prince Diadem)*

Aziz told this tale to Prince Diadem:

KNOW MY DEAR LORD, that I was the only son of a great merchant, brought up in my father's house with an orphan cousin, whose father, before his death, had made my parents promise that we should be married when we were old enough.

They let us always be together so that we became

inseparable. We slept together in the same bed with no suspicion of the results which might arise from such a course. Yet, on looking back, I think that my cousin knew and surmised more about these things than I did, when I remember the way she would clasp me in her arms and press her thighs to mine.

When we reached the required age, my father said to my mother: "This year we must marry Aziz and Aziza." My mother agreed on a day with him and he invited all his relations and friends, saying: "On Friday, after the prayer, the marriage contract will be written for Aziz and Aziza." My mother informed all her friends and those near to her; and then set to work with the help of her servants to give a thorough wash to the reception hall and make its marbles shine again. She stretched carpets upon the floor and ornamented the walls with golden worked silks, which were taken for the occasion from the great chest. My father undertook the provision of pastries and sweetmeats, and prepared large trays of drinks with expert care. Before the guests were expected, my mother sent me to bathe at the hammam, charging a slave to carry a beautiful new robe behind me that I might put it on after the bath. I went to the hammam and, putting on the robe after my bath, found it so delightfully scented that people stopped in the street to smell the air as I went home.

I was just turning into the mosque to make the necessary Friday prayer when I remembered a friend whom I had forgotten to invite. I began to walk very quickly to his house, as I did not want to be late; and soon found myself in a side street which was unknown to me. As I was dripping with sweat after my bath and because of my heavy new robe, I took advantage of the cool shadow of the lane to sit down on a bench

beside the wall, first spreading my gold-embroidered handkerchief to protect my garments from the bench. The sweat still fell in drops from my forehead and, as I could not use my handkerchief to wipe it away, I was about to have recourse to the skirt of my new robe when a white silk handkerchief fell on the ground in front of me as lightly as a subsiding breeze. It seemed so cool and its perfume so miraculous that I hastened to pick it up. Then I raised my eyes to see who had so opportunely come to my aid and caught a glimpse for the first time of that lady who was to give me one of the gazelles embroidered on silk.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE LEANED SMILING from the copper window of an upper story; I shall not try to paint her beauty for you. When she saw my long regard, she made these signs: she passed her index finger between her lips, and lowering her middle finger, so that it pressed against the index of the left hand, carried the two between her breasts. Then she withdrew her head and shut the window.

I sat there, perplexed and burning with desire, fastening my eyes to the window in the hope that she might come again; but, though I remained till sunset unmindful of my marriage and my bride, the casement remained obstinately closed.

At last I desolately left the bench and began walking towards my father's house. As I went I took the handkerchief, whose odour I hope to meet again in Paradise, and, unfolding it, saw, on one of the corners, these verses embroidered in a beautiful and complicated writing:

*Here I my secret heart have stripped
In slight elaborated script;
If you object: "It is indeed
Too tortured and too fine to read."
I answer: "Nothing is too fine
To symbolise this love of mine,
And lines of complicated art
Are no more tortured than my heart."*

On the opposite corner of the handkerchief, this poem was sewn in bold regular characters:

*Pearls seen through amber
Or hint of apples in the green
Interlacing leaves which clamber
The red fruit hardly seen:
So through the down
His young cheeks dimly shown.*

*If you crave death and nothing less,
His heavy eyes will satisfy;
But if you wish for drunkenness
Leave the singing and the drinking,
For both wine and song are winking
In his cheeks' vermilion dye.*

*Smell a myrtle after rain,
You will meet my love again;*

*Bend a slim wet bough to you,
Feel it quiver, feel it strain,
Holding back through all its length;
You'd smile through crying, if you knew
The cool sweetness of his strength.*

I was quite insane for love of the unknown when I reached the house at nightfall and found my cousin sitting in tears. On seeing me, she dried her eyes and, while she helped me to unrobe, gently questioned me concerning my lateness and informed me that all the guests, the emirs, the great merchants, and the kadi with his witnesses, had sat down to meat after waiting for me a long time and had gone away having eaten and drunken their fill. She added: "Your father is very angry and has sworn that we shall not be married until next year. Tell me, my cousin, why you behaved in this way?"

I told her the whole story and showed the handkerchief; she read the verses upon it and then burst into tears. "Did she not speak to you?" she asked; and I replied: "Only by signs which I did not understand. I beg you tell me what they mean." I imitated my lady's play with her fingers, and my cousin said: "Dear, dear Aziz, even if you asked my eyes of me I would not hesitate to give them! Console yourself; for I am ready to serve you with all my heart and make easy a meeting between you and this woman who surely loves you and whom you love. Her signs—for women understand these things instinctively—show that she desires you with passion and promises you a meeting in two days: the number is shown by two fingers between two breasts and passion by the finger in the lips. My love for you is a love of service, so I take the two of you under the wing of my protection."

I thanked her for her devotion and the hope which she had given me; and remained indoors for two days, eagerly waiting for the hour of meeting. In my grief I lay with my head across my cousin's knees and she encouraged me. Moreover, when the hour came, she helped me to dress and perfumed me with her own hands.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AZIZ THUS CONTINUED his tale to young prince Diamdem:

She burnt benzoin below my robe and embraced me tenderly, saying: "Dearest cousin, behold the hour of your calm. Be courageous and return to me satisfied. I wish you peace, and will have no happiness save in your happiness. Yet do not delay too long to come back and tell me your adventure, for there are fair days and fairer nights to come for us." Trying to still the beating of my heart, I took leave of my cousin and set forth. When I came to the shady by-street, I sat down on the bench in a state of uncontrollable excitement. In a few minutes the window opened and I thought that I should faint; nevertheless I controlled myself and, looking up, saw all the sweet face of the girl. I lay back trembling while she looked at me with lighted eyes, holding a mirror and a red handkerchief in her hand. Without saying a word she pulled back

her sleeves so that I might see her arms to the elbows and then touched her breasts with five extended fingers; next, she waved the red handkerchief up and down three times, twisting and folding it; and lastly, after a long and loving glance, shut the window and disappeared. I was left in indescribable perplexity, not knowing whether to go or stay. To be on the safe side I waited till midnight and then, sick with doubt, returned to my father's house. I found my poor cousin sitting up for me, red-eyed from weeping, with a resigned sadness upon her face. I fell to the floor in a state of pitiable exhaustion and my cousin, running to me, took me in her arms and kissed my eyes, wiping the tears from them with her sleeve. She made me drink a glass of syrup, lightly scented with water of flowers, and tenderly questioned me as to what had happened.

Although I was broken with fatigue I told her all, imitating the gestures of the delightful stranger; and my cousin Aziza said: "O Aziz of my heart, these signs, especially the five fingers and the mirror, were meant to show that the girl will leave a message for you in five days at the dyer's on the corner of the by-street." "Sweet sister, God grant that your interpretation be the right one!" I cried: "There is, in fact, the shop of a Jewish dyer at one corner of the little road." At this point I was unable to fight any longer against my memories, so I sobbed on Aziza's bosom and she comforted me with her caresses. At last she said: "Lovers often have to suffer and endure through years and years of waiting, and yet they arm themselves with fortitude and do so; you have hardly had to wait a week; be strong, my dear, eat some of this meat and drink a little of this wine."

But I could not swallow a mouthful or a sip; I lost

my sleep and the colour from my cheeks, for this was the first time that I had known the heat of passion and tasted the bitter excellence of love.

I waited for five days growing thin the while, and my cousin did not leave me for a moment. Day and night she sat at my bedside, watching over me or telling me tales of lovers to distract me. Sometimes I caught her wiping away furtive tears. When the five days had passed, she heated water for me and sent me to the hammam of the house; afterwards she helped to dress me, saying: "Hurry to the appointed place, and may Allah lead you to your desires and cure your soul with the balm of realisation!"

I hurried to the shop of the Jewish dyer, but it was Saturday and the place was shut. Nevertheless, I sat before the door until the time of evening prayer, and then so far into the night that I became afraid of the darkness and decided to leave my post. It was as a drunken man, not knowing what he does or says, that I reached the house and found poor Aziza standing with her face turned towards the wall and murmuring verses of unhappy love.

As soon as she saw me, she dried her eyes with her sleeve and ran to me, trying to smile. "Dear cousin, may God extend your happiness for ever!" she said; and then asked me why I had risked a return through the deserted streets, instead of staying the night with my mistress. I flew into a passion, thinking that she laughed at me, and pushed her away from me so violently that she fell across the diwan, cutting her brow severely on one of its corners. Instead of railing against my brutality, she rose without a word and, dressing her wound with a little burning tinder, bound up her forehead with her handkerchief. Lastly, she washed the blood from the marble floor and came to

me with a tranquil smile as if nothing had happened.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“DEAR COUSIN,” she said to me very tenderly, “I am more sorry than I can say if I grieved you with my inapt greeting. Forgive me, and tell me what has happened that I may see if I can help you.” I told her of my failure, and she exclaimed: “Aziz of my eyes, I can tell you for certain that you will be successful; this is but a proof which the girl has required of your patience and constancy. Tomorrow you must sit on the bench outside her window again; and I am sure that you will have some news of her.”

Aziza brought me a dish covered with various meats in porcelain bowls; but I pushed them roughly away so that the whole fell upon the carpet. My cousin carefully and silently picked up the fallen meats and wiped the carpets. Then she sat down at the foot of the mattress on which I lay and fanned me all night with a fan and soothed me with words of infinite caress. “O what a fool is he who falls in love!” I said to myself.

In the morning I hastened to the bench under my lady’s window and, even as I sat down, her delightful head appeared smiling from the casement. For a moment she drew back, and then reappeared holding a bag, a mirror, a lantern, and a vase of flowers. First she put the mirror in the bag, tied the bag, and threw

it behind her into the room; then with an adorable gesture, she loosened her hair which fell heavily all about her face; next she placed the lantern among the flowers; and lastly, disappeared withdrawing her face and my heart behind the limit of my sight. She shut the window; and thereby shut the window of my soul.

Knowing by experience that nothing was to be gained by waiting, I returned home more dead than alive and found my cousin sitting in tears, with her head wrapped in a double bandage; one fold was passed round her wounded forehead and one across her eyes, weakened by weeping. She did not see me because her head was bent and leaning on her hand. She was sweetly singing to herself.

Aziz,
Ah, sweet unfond
And golden vagabond!
Aziz,
When other hospitality is spent,
Remember that a warm and crimson tent,
Aziz, ah Aziz,

Waits in my heart.
Let my lips smart,
Aziz,
With salted drink;
If at the peach-tree pink
Sources of passion's daughters
You taste fresh waters,
Aziz,
Ah, sweet unfond
And golden vagabond,
Aziz, ah Aziz!

She looked round on finishing her song and saw me; so she hid her grief and, after standing silently before me for a few moments, said: "Sit down, dear Aziz, and tell me what happened." I informed her of each least movement of my mysterious lover, and she said: "Cousin, rejoice, for your desires are granted! The mirror placed in the bag means the set of sun, a meeting for tomorrow night; the loosened black hair veiling the white face is but a confirmation of the same thing; the flowers mean that you must go into the garden; and the lantern among them, that you will find a lantern there which will lead you to your beloved." "Unhappy Aziz!" I cried in disappointment, "O sister, how many times have you not raised false hope by false interpretation!" Aziza was pleasanter to me than ever and sat beside me; though she did not dare to fetch me food and drink because she feared more anger.

Towards the evening of the next day I determined to try my fortune, being encouraged to do so by Aziza, who had given up all hope for herself although she wept in secret. I bathed and dressed myself in my fairest robes; but, before I went, Aziza looked long upon me and said in a woeful voice: "Take this grain of pure musk and perfume your lips with it. I want you to promise me one thing: when you have met your lover and been satisfied, recite these lines to her." So saying, she wound her arms about my neck and sobbed. I promised to do as she wished, and she recited this verse:

*Tell me, lovers, tell me truly:
Shall not love remain unruly
In the heart that says him nay?*

*Fight upon the red terrain there,
Fight till all but he is slain there,
Seem to fall, but rise again there
Ever and a day?*

I said these lines over and got them by heart, though I was far from knowing either their intention or what they would one day mean to me. When I came to the garden of my beloved's house, I found the gate open and a lantern shining in the depths of the trees. I went towards it through the darkness and found, with a thrill of surprise, a magnificent hall, having an arched dome bearing a cupola of ivory and ebony. Gold torches and large crystal lamps, hung from the ceiling by precious chains, lighted a many-tinted fountain, the noise of whose falling waters refreshed more than a drink from a commoner source. Beside the fountain a stool of nacre held a silver tray covered with a piece of silk and by it, on the carpet, was a great pitcher of glazed earthenware, the long neck of which was stoppered with a gold and crystal cup.

I lifted the silk from the silver tray and those delicacies which I found beneath I see even yet in my more happy dreams.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WAZIR DANDAN continued to repeat to king Al-Makan in these words the tale which Aziz told prince Diadem:

THERE WERE FOUR roast chicken, golden-brown and odorous, seasoned with fine spices; and there were four deep porcelain bowls: the first contained *mahallabia*, perfumed with orange juice, sprinkled with cinnamon and powder of nuts; the second held crushed raisins discreetly sublimated with rose; the third, ah! the third was filled with *baklawah*, each of whose thousand leaves was the work of an artist, with lozenge shaped divisions of an infinite suggestion; and in the fourth were almond cakes ready to burst because of their generous provision of heavy syrup. The other half of the dish was bright with all my favourite fruits; figs wrinkled with ripeness, knowing themselves desirable; grape-fruit, limes, grapes, and bananas; these were divided by intervals of coloured flowers; roses, jasmin, tulips, lilies, and jonquils.

When I had considered these delights I bade my cares be gone; and yet I was troubled to see no creature of God; neither slave, nor servant, nor mistress to serve me with these good things. I waited patiently for three hours and then began to be tortured with hunger, as I had not eaten for a long time because of my passion. Allah sent me appetite and I hardly thought of poor Aziza and her prediction of this garden.

To fill the chasm of my appetite, I threw myself upon my favourite almond cakes and ate I know not how many of them: they seemed drugged with a spiritual perfume from the transparent fingers of girls in Paradise. Next I attacked the brittle squares of the juicy *baklawah* and, when none of that was left, emptied the white *mahallabia* into my mouth and soothed my heart with that. The dish of chicken next attracted me. I ate one, two, or three, or four; they had been stuffed so learnedly throughout all their

hollows and were so aptly seasoned with tart pomegranate seeds that I cannot remember the exact number. Finally I sweetened and caressed my throat by a slow swallowing of fruit; and ended my meal with sweet pomegranate jam. Giving thanks to Allah, I drank deep of the wine-jar, putting aside the useless cup.

A lassitude of sleep soon overcame my muscles; I had hardly the strength to wash my hands before I fell in heavy slumber on the cushions of the carpet.

I cannot say what happened during the night; I only know that the sun's rays woke me in the morning, stretched on the naked marble, with a pinch of salt and a handful of powdered charcoal balanced upon the flesh of my belly. I jumped up and shook myself, looking to left and right, but I could see no one. I was furious with myself for my weakness and gluttony, and repented bitterly upon my homeward journey. I entered my father's house sadly and found Aziza softly lamenting with these verses:

*I know by his scent
Before he reaches my hair
That the breeze has risen and dances upon the meadow.*

*If one could take love as one takes a lover
And rest his head between the breasts
And know peace!*

*These green and gold and blue toys
Which Allah calls his world,
How can I play with them without Aziz?*

Aziza jumped up on seeing me and greeted me with smiles. She helped me to take off my clothes and,

as she did so, sniffed each garment many times. Then she said to me: "As Allah lives, dear Aziz, these are not such scents as a loving woman leaves upon a man's robe! Tell me what has happened." She became pale when she heard my story and exclaimed in a frightened voice: "I am distressed for you, my cousin; I fear this unknown woman intends a bitter future for you. The salt signifies that she finds you body lacking in savour, which can sleep so easily in a watch of love; the charcoal means that your face is black with shame in her eyes. Dear Aziz, this woman, instead of treating you kindly and waking you gently when she came, has shown that she thinks you good for nothing except food and drink and sleep. Therefore God deliver you from such a love!" I beat my breast at the words of Aziza, crying: "The girl was right! As Allah lives the fault was mine. Lovers do not sleep. In pity's name, tell me what I must do now, Aziza."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-seventeenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the wazir Dandan continued the tale which Aziz told to prince Diadem in this manner.

MY POOR COUSIN loved me so much that she grieved for me, and said: "O Aziz, I will help you; but it

would be easier for me if custom allowed me to come and go at my pleasure. As I am supposed to be preparing for marriage I have to keep the house; yet I think that I can watch your interests from afar, though I cannot interfere in person between you and this girl. Return to the same place tonight, my cousin, and fight against your temptation to sleep. This will be easy, if you do not touch the food and drink. Allah have you in His protection, for I believe that you will see your love towards the end of the first quarter of the night."

I could hardly wait till sunset and was on the point of setting out when Aziza stopped me for a moment with these words: "Above all, when your mistress has given satisfaction to your desires, do not forget to say to her the poem which I taught you." "I will not forget," I answered, and left the house.

On reaching the garden I found the hall lighted and ornamented as before; also the same tempting meats and pastries, fruits and flowers, set forth on the same service. The combined scent of savour and sweetness soon sapped the resolution of my soul. I ate my fill of everything and drank from the glazed jar until my belly could not hold another drop. Very soon my eyelids fell and I could not even keep them open with my fingers. "I am not going to sleep," I said, "but just for a moment I will lay my head upon the cushions. I shall rest a little, but most certainly I shall not sleep." I leaned my head against one of the cushions and woke when the morning was far advanced, not in the bright hall, but in a dirty place among the stables. On my belly was the bone of a sheep's foot, a round ball, some date-stones, some locust-beans, two dirhams, and a knife. I shook these things from me in confusion and, keeping only the knife, hurried homewards

with greater self-reproaches than before. I found Aziza singing this song:

*Though I say his beauty lessens
Horror of my deliquescence,
Tears have rotted all my heart,
Soaking soul and self apart;
And unknowing Aziz stands
To dig deep gulfs of pain with both his hands.*

I attracted her attention with a few oaths; but her sweet patience would not be moved. Drying her eyes, she threw her arms about my neck and, leaning upon my breast though I tried to push her away, said to me: "Poor, poor Aziz! I see that you have slept again." At these words, I fell back upon the carpet in a catalepsy of anger, throwing the knife away. Aziza took a fan and, sitting beside me, fanned me, saying the while that all would come right. When at her request I described the things which I had found upon my belly, she said: "O cousin, did I not warn you against sleep and the temptation of the food?" "Ah, but tell me what they mean!" I cried.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-eighteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AZIZA ANSWERED: "The round ball was meant to tell you that, though you were in the actual house of your

mistress, your heart went idle in the air and was not passionate; the date-stones, that you have lost your savour, since passion is the fruit of the heart and you have none of it; the locust-beans, from the tree of Job, father of patience, were meant to remind you that his virtue is necessary for lovers; the bone of the sheep's foot I dare not explain." "But, Aziza," I cried, "you have forgotten the knife and the two coins." Aziza trembled at this saying: "Dear cousin, I am very frightened for you. The two silver coins symbolise her eyes and mean to say that she swears upon her eyes to cut your throat with a knife if you return to her hall again and sleep. How frightened I am, O Aziz; yet I keep my fear to myself. I weep in silence in the empty house, and have only my tears to console me!" My heart pitied her, and I said: "But, dear cousin, what is the remedy of all this? In Allah's name, show me a way out of this misfortune." "I will do so," she answered, "but you must listen carefully to what I say and obey me implicitly, otherwise I shall not succeed." "I swear by my father's head that I will obey you in all things," I said.

Aziza, delighted with my compliance, kissed me happily, saying: "You must sleep here all day, so that you will have no temptation to sleep tonight; and when you wake I will give you food and drink, so that you will have nothing to fear at all." She made me lie down and rubbed me wisely and gently until I fell asleep. I woke towards evening and found her still sitting at my side, fanning me cheerfully; but there were traces of tears upon her garments so that I knew that she had wept. When she saw that I was awake, she brought me food and put it, piece by piece, into my mouth so that I had nothing to do but to swallow

and was soon satisfied. Then she gave me a concoction of jujubes with sugared rose-water and my thirst passed from me. She washed my hands, wiped them with a musk-scented napkin, and sprinkled me all over with flower-waters. She brought me a marvellous new robe and helped me on with it, saying: "If Allah wills, tonight you shall come to your desire. Do not forget my advice." I turned at the door, saying: "What advice?" and she answered: "The lines I taught you, O Aziz."

I came to the garden, entered the vaulted hall, and sat down on the sumptuous carpets. As I was already satisfied, I looked indifferently upon the savoury dishes which were spread for me and waited without difficulty until the middle of the night. I saw no one, I heard no sound, the night seemed long as a year; but I waited patiently.

When three-quarters of the night were already passed and the cocks were beginning to crow for the false dawn, I began to feel hungry. Soon my desire for the exquisite dishes became so great that I could not contain myself. I lifted the cloths, ate till I was satisfied, and drank first one, then two, and finally ten glasses of the wine. My head became heavy, but I jerked it from side to side to fight off sleep. Just as I was about to be overcome, I heard a light sound as of laughter and silks; I had hardly time to leap to my feet and wash my hands and mouth, before the great curtain at the back of the hall was pulled aside. She came, smiling among ten young slaves. They were as bright as ten stars, but she as a moon. She wore a green silk robe, half covered with red gold. I can hardly give you a hint of her loveliness, dear lord, by repeating these words of the poet:

*Tall and proud and half undressed,
The white swell of either breast
Breaking from her sea-green vest,
She boasts: "Like the blue sky I mock
Every echo, like a rock
I stand against the earthquake shock."
Yet, I think my fingers Moses,
Who can make a rock disclose his
Hidden stream of wine and roses
Underneath her frock.*

In fact, young sir, I said these lines over to her and she smiled at me, saying: "That is excellent; but how is it that I do not find you sleeping?" "The breeze of your coming fanned my soul awake," I answered.

She winked at her slaves and they left us alone in the hall; she sat down beside me, stretching out her breasts to me, and threw her arms about my neck. I pressed my mouth to hers, sucking her upper lip while she sucked my lower one; then I took her by the waist, bending it, and we rolled together upon the carpets. I slipped into the delicate division of her limbs and took all her robes away from her. We began assaults, mingled with kisses and strokings, pinchings and bites, thigh liftings and exposures, and games of hide-and-seek which took us all about the hall. At last she fell passive in my arms, dead from desire. That was a night sweet to my heart, a holiday of the senses. A poet has said:

*On this preferred and easy night
The cup was never empty of its red;
I said to sleep: "We know you not," and said:
"I know you," to her thighs of silver white.*



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"Aris and Arisa"

When morning came, I wished to take my leave, but she stopped me, saying: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AZIZ THUS continued his tale:

SHE STOPPED ME, saying: "I have something to show you and a piece of advice to give you." I sat down again a little surprised. Then she unfolded to my sight one of those silk squares embroidered with a gazelle, which you see before you, my lord. She gave it to me, saying: "Guard it carefully; for it is the work of one of my girl friends, the princess of the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. At some time in your life it will be of great importance to you; and besides it will always remind you of myself." I thanked her in equal astonishment and confusion and took my leave, quite forgetting to recite the lines which Aziza had taught me.

When I came to my father's house, I found my poor cousin lying on her bed, with every sign of imminent illness in her face; yet when she saw me she tried to rise to her feet and, being unable to do so, dragged herself weeping across the floor to me. She kissed my breast and held me for a long time against her heart. Then she asked me if I had recited her lines. I answered that I had forgotten because of my sur-

prise at receiving the gazelle embroidered upon the square of silk. I showed it to her and Aziza burst into sobs and murmured between her tears:

*If the red beating heart could speak,
You'd hear it undertaking
That love is weak
And the end breaking.*

"Dear cousin," she added, "as you hope for mercy, do not forget to recite my lines the next time." "Repeat them again, for I have a little forgotten them," I answered. She did so, and I then remembered them perfectly. At last, when evening came again, she said: "It is time for you to go. Allah lead you to your happiness in safety!"

When I got to the garden I found my mistress impatiently waiting for me. She kissed me and I lay upon her lap; then, when we had eaten and drunk, we possessed each and every part of the other during the fullness of the night. This time I did not forget to repeat to my lady the lines of Aziza:

*Tell me, lovers, tell me truly:
Shall not love remain unruly
In the heart that says him nay?
Fight upon the red terrain there,
Fight till all but he is slain there,
Seem to fall but rise again there
Ever and a day?*

I cannot hope to tell you the effect which these verses had upon my lady; her heart which she ever spoke of as hard melted within her breast; she wept and improvised these answering lines:

*Just as a lover can be bold,
A rival can be true.
Alas, alas;
Guessing at all there was,
She suffered; and she knew
But never told.*

I carefully kept this in my mind that I might repeat it to Aziza. I found her stretched upon a mattress and my mother seated at her side, caring for her. Aziza was very pale and displayed all the weakness of a swoon. She lifted her eyes unhappily to mine without being able to make any other movement. My mother looked sternly at me, shaking her head, and saying: "Aziz, are you not ashamed to leave your betrothed in this way?" But Aziza took my mother's hand and kissed it, saying in a low voice: "Dear cousin, did you forget my advice?" "Rest assured, dear Aziza," I answered, "I said your lines over to her. She wept exceedingly and answered with these." I thereupon repeated the poem which my mistress had made. Aziza wept silently as she listened; and afterwards whispered these verses:

*Though in all indiscretion there is death,
Too much discretion can cut short the breath.
Renunciation was the life I led,
A long corrosive suffering,
A silent giving up of everything
With either hand.
And yet, when I am dead,
Greet with my greeting radiant and heart-whole
The other woman, who destroyed my soul;
For she will understand.*

Then she said: "Son of my uncle, I pray you when you see your love again, say this poem over to her, and may your life be easy and sweet, O Aziz!"

When night fell, I returned to the garden and found my mistress waiting in the hall. We ate and drank and played many pretty games sitting side by side, and then slept in each other's arms until the day. Before leaving I remembered my promise to Aziza and recited the other verses which my poor cousin had made.

My mistress uttered a great cry on hearing them and retreated in terror. "As Allah lives," she cried, "she who said that poem to you is now dead! I trust that she was no relation of yours, neither a sister nor a cousin; for I affirm and reaffirm that now she lies among the dead." "She is my betrothed, the daughter of my uncle," I answered; and my mistress cried: "What do you say? Why do you lie? It is not true! If she had been your betrothed you would have loved her." "Nevertheless she is my betrothed, my cousin Aziza," I answered. "Why did you not tell me?" cried my love. "As Allah lives, I would never have taken her man away from her if I had known of that tie between you. Tell me, did she know of our amorous meetings?" "Indeed she did," I answered. "It was she who explained the signs which you made me at first; without her I would never have won through to you. I achieved my object only through her good advice and willing counsel." "Then you have caused her death!" she cried. "I pray to Allah that he does not overwhelm your youth as you have overwhelmed the youth of this poor child. Go quickly, and find out what has happened." Filled with foreboding I hurried towards my father's house; at the corner of the little street in which it was situated I heard the cries

of women coming from the building. Neighbours were hurrying in and out and one of them said to me: "They found Aziza stretched out dead before the door of her chamber." I rushed into the house and the first person I met was my mother, who said to me: "You are responsible before Allah for her death! The weight of her blood is about your neck! My son, my son, you have been but a sorry bridegroom!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE OVERWHELMED ME with reproaches until my father entered the room and then she fell silent. My father made preparations for the funeral; and, when all our friends and kinsmen were gathered together, we celebrated the rites of full burial, remaining three days under the tents of her tomb for a reading of the Sacred Book.

I returned to the house with my mother, feeling my heart oppressed with pity for the untimely dead. After we had entered, my mother said to me: "My son, I wish you to tell me in what way you broke poor Aziza's heart. I often asked her the cause of her illness, but she would never tell me and never breathed a bitter word against you. Until the end, she never spoke your name without blessings. Tell me then, in Allah's name, how you brought about her death." "I did not do so," I answered; but my mother insisted,

saying: "I sat by her bedside at about the time of her last breath; she turned towards me, opening her eyes, and said to me: 'Wife of my uncle, I pray to the one God that He will ask the price of my blood from no one and pardon those who have so tortured my heart. I leave a perishable world for one immortal.' 'Do not speak of death, my child,' I said. 'Allah will make you well again soon.' But she smiled sadly at me, saying: 'Wife of my uncle, I beg you to give your son Aziz my last advice and supplicate him not to forget it. It is this: when he goes to the place to which he goes, let him say before he comes away:

*Better, sweeter to die
Than deal in treachery.*

He will make me happy if he does this, and I will watch over him after my death as I have done in my lifetime.' With that she lifted her pillow and took from under it something which she charged me, under oath, not to give you until you returned to better ways of thought and began sincerely to weep her death. I keep this thing, my son, until I see you fulfil the condition."

"So be it," I said to my mother, "you might at least show me the thing." But this she vehemently refused to do and left me.

You can understand, my lord, that at that time I was almost mad with my effort not to listen to the voice of my heart. But soon, instead of weeping for poor Aziza and carrying my heart in black because of her, I gave myself up to pleasure and distraction. Nothing was sweeter for me than the resumption of my nightly visits to the garden. Hardly had night come than I hastened to my mistress and found her

as impatient for my coming as if she stood upon a gridiron. She ran to me and, hanging from my neck, asked news of my cousin; when I gave her the details of the death and the funeral, she said in a compassionate voice: "If only I had known of her good services to you and her wonderful abnegation, before she died! Indeed, indeed, I would have thanked her and found some way of repaying her."

Then said I: "Even in death she had counsel for me; she advised me through my mother to say these words to you, the last she ever uttered:

*Better, sweeter to die
Than deal in treachery."*

When the girl heard these words, she cried: "Allah take her to His mercy! Even after her death she has been of great service to you! By these few words she has saved you from the deadly snare which I had prepared for you and the pits into which I had thought to see you fall."

I was indeed astonished at these strange words, and cried out: "What are you saying? What talk is this of snares and pits when we are bound together by perfect love?"

"Innocent child," she said, "I can see that you know nothing of all the treachery of which we women are capable. I do not wish to undecieve you; but only that you should know that you owe your safety to your cousin. Yet I spare you but on condition that you never give look or word to any woman, young or old, except me. Woe betide you, oh, woe betide you, for now there is none to deliver you out of my hands, since she who fortified you with her counsels is dead. Take care, therefore, not to forget my condition. . . . Now I have a request to make of you."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“WHAT IS THAT?” I asked, and she answered: “That you take me to visit the tomb of poor Aziza, for I wish to place some words of grief upon it.” “If Allah wills, I will do so tomorrow,” I promised; and lay down to pass the night with her. But all the time she asked me questions about Aziza, saying: “Ah, why did you not tell me that she was your cousin?” In my turn I said: “By the bye, I forgot to ask you the meaning of the words concerning death and treachery.” But on this point she would tell me nothing.

On the first hour of the next morning, she rose and took a large purse filled with dinars, saying to me: “Rise up and lead me to the tomb. I wish to build a dome over it.” I left the garden, walking in front of her; and she followed me through the streets distributing dinars to every poor person, and saying to each: “These alms are for the repose of the soul of Aziza.” When we came to the tomb she threw herself down on the marble and washed it with her tears. Presently she took from a silk bag a steel graver and a gold mallet and carved upon the polished marble these verses in an elegant script:

*I passed a tomb among green shades
Where seven anemones with down-dropped heads*

*Wept tears of dew upon the stone beneath.
I questioned underneath my breath
Who the poor dead might be
And a voice answered me. . . .
So now I pray that Allah may be moved
To drop sleep on her eyes because she loved.
She will not care though lovers do not come
To wipe the dust from off a lover's tomb,
She will not care for anything. But I please
To plant some more dew-wet anemones
That they may weep.*

When she had finished, she cast a glance of farewell on the tomb and walked back to her palace with me. She had become very tender of a sudden, and said to me again and again: "Never leave me." I hastened to reassure her; and went to visit her regularly every night. She always greeted me with warmth and expansion and spared herself no pains to give me pleasure. Such was my existence: to eat and drink, to kiss and couple, daily to be dressed in robes and shirts finer than the day before, until I became very fat and jubilant, entirely forgetting my poor Aziza.

This lasted for a whole year and it happened that, one day at the beginning of the second, I went to the hammam and dressed myself in my most costly garments. Leaving the bath, I drank a cup of sherbert, inhaling with delight the splendid smells which rose from my robe, feeling more happy than I had ever done and seeing all about me coloured in white. Life was exceedingly pleasant to me and I went walking and running like a man light with wine, in pleased anticipation of seeing my love again.

I was passing by a little street called the Blind Alley of the Flute, quite near my mistress's house, when I

saw an old woman coming towards me holding a lantern to make plain her path and carrying a letter in its wrapping. I stopped, and she wished me peace.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE WISHED ME peace, saying: "My child, do you know how to read?" "I know how to read, good aunt," I answered. Then she said: "I pray you take this letter and read it to me." I did so willingly; the writer stated that he was in good health and sent every friendly wish to his sister and kinsmen. The old woman raised her arms to the sky when I had read and called down blessing upon me for the good news that I had announced. "Allah soothe all your griefs as you have soothed mine," she said; and, taking the letter, continued on her way. I had an urgent need to make water, so I squatted against the wall and did so. I rose, shook myself well and, rearranging my robe, was about to depart when I saw the old woman coming back. She took my hand and raised it to her lips, saying: "Excuse me, my lord, but I have a favour to ask you; if you grant it, you will make me the happiest of women and will yourself be recompensed by the Master of Reward. I beg you to come with me to the door of our house, which is quite near here, and read this letter again to the women of the house-

hold; for they would not be content with my version of it. Above all, my daughter will be most delighted to hear the whole of the letter as she loves her brother very much and this is the first time we have heard of him for ten years. He has been away with a trading caravan and we have wept him for dead. Do not refuse me, my lord, you will not even have the trouble of coming into the house; you can read the letter from outside. You know the words of the Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!) concerning those who console their neighbours: 'He who lifts any of the griefs of this world from the head of a believer, Allah will take count of it and lift seventy-two griefs from his head in the world to come.' " I hastened to comply with her request, saying: "Walk before me, to light me and show me the road." The old woman set out in front of me and, after a few steps, we came to the door of a palace.

This door was of the largest size, plated with worked bronze and red copper. I stood close to it and the old woman called out in the Persian tongue. Her cry was answered by the opening of the door and there in front of me appeared, on the other side of the threshold, a light and dimpled girl, smiling, with naked feet upon the washed marble, holding the fullness of her drawers half way up her thighs for fear of wetting them. Her sleeves were rolled up to her shoulders so that her armpits appeared dark against the whiteness of her robe. I did not know which to admire the more, the alabaster which had been moulded to the shape of her thighs or the crystal which had been worked into arms for her. Her slim ankles were circled with gold rings crusted with colours of jewels; her small wrists bore heavy bracelets of multiple fire; single pearls of marvellous water hung at her

ears; and, from her neck, a triple chain of selected emeralds. Her hair was caught up in a light chaplet of diamonds. I guessed that, before opening the door, she had been indulging in some very pleasant pastime, when I saw that her chemise hung out disordered from her drawers and that the strings of these were all untied. Her general beauty and the particular beauty of her thighs threw me into a pleasant reflection and, in spite of myself, I called to mind these words of the poet:

*Lift your robe quite up, God bless me,
Lift your robe quite up!
I can feel your eyes undress me,
Lift your robe and I'll confess me
Drunken with one scarlet cup.*

When the girl saw me, she seemed all surprised; with a candid glance of her great eyes and the sweetest voice I have ever heard in my life, she said: "Mother, is this the man who is going to read our letter?" The old woman answered that I was; so the exquisite child stretched out her hand to give me the letter which she had already taken from her mother. I leaned forward to receive it when suddenly, just as I was two feet from the door, I felt the old woman push me violently in the back with her head and was hurled forward into the vestibule. Quick as lightning she followed me in and shut the street door upon me. Thus I found myself a prisoner of two women without having the least idea what they wished of me. I had not long to wait, however.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHILE I WAS still staggering in the vestibule the young girl tripped me neatly, threw me to the ground and lay all along on top of me, pressing me in her arms as if she would stifle me. I thought that I was to be killed; but my fate was far otherwise! After certain movements, the girl half lifted herself and, sitting upon my belly, began rubbing me with her hands so furiously and so strangely that I began to lose my senses and to shut my eyes like a man stricken with madness. The girl helped me to my feet and, taking me by the hand, led me, followed by her mother, through seven corridors and seven galleries to her own apartment. I followed like a drunken man, and indeed I was drunken with the effect of her terribly expert fingers. She made me sit down and bade me open my eyes. I did so, and found that I was in a great hall lighted by four glazed arcades. It was so spacious that warriors might have tilted upon its floor; its pavement was all of marble; its walls were covered with decorations of bright colours mingled together in exquisite design. All the furnishings were of agreeable shape upholstered in brocade and velvet; and, at the bottom of the hall, was a deep alcove, holding a golden bed so covered with pearls that it would have been fit for a king such as you, my lord.

Somewhat to my consternation, the girl called me by my own name, saying: "O Aziz, do you prefer life or death?" "Life," I answered. "If that is so, you have but to marry me," she said. On that I cried out: "Not so, as Allah lives; for I would rather die than

marry a cunning and licentious woman." "Believe me, Aziz," returned my captor, "you will be rid once and for all of the Daughter of Wanton Dalila." "I do not know anyone of that name," I answered. She burst out laughing, and said: "What! You do not know the Daughter of Wanton Dalila, when she has been your mistress for a year and four months? Beware, poor Aziz, beware the treacheries of this God-detested harlot. There is not a corrupter soul on earth than hers; she has slain a hundred with her own hands; she has committed a thousand dark treacheries upon her lovers; it is astonishing to me that you should be still alive."

"Dear mistress," I answered in confusion, "will you tell me how you know the person of whom you speak and all those details which are unknown even to me?" To this she replied: "I know her as well as Destiny knows the designs of Destiny; but before I explain her to you I wish to hear your love adventure from your own mouth: for, as I have said, I am surprised that you should still be alive."

I told the girl the whole story of my lover and her garden, with the death of poor Aziza; at my cousin's name she wept and beat her hands together in sign of deep despair, saying: "Allah comfort you, O Aziz! I see clearly that you owe your safety with the Daughter of Wanton Dalila to poor Aziza. Now that you have lost her, look well to yourself. . . . But I must not tell you more. Indeed there are no women left today as admirable as your dead cousin." "You must know," I said, "that, before she died, she advised me to say to my mistress these simple words:

*Better, sweeter to die
Than deal in treachery."*

The girl cried out on these words: "Those lines have saved you from death, Aziz. Aziza watches over you in death as in life. But let us leave thinking of the dead, for they are in the peace of Allah; the present is for the living: know then, dear Aziz, that it has long been my desire to have you with me night and day and only now have I been able to succeed in laying hands on you." "That is so," I answered, and she continued: "You are young, dear friend, and have no idea of all the tricks which an old woman like my mother can compass." "That is so," I said, and she continued: "Resign yourself to fate; you have only to allow yourself to be made a husband. I tell you again that I will have nothing at all to do with you except after legitimate contract before Allah and His Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!) All your wishes shall be fulfilled: you can have treasures, fair stuffs for your robes, light clean turbans; and all for nothing. I will never allow you to loosen the strings of your purse, for in my house the bread is always fresh and the cup always filled. In return for these things, dear Aziz, I require but one thing." "What is that?" I asked, and she answered: "That you do with me as a cock does." "And what does a cock do?" I asked in my astonishment.

The young girl laughed so heartily that she fell over on her backside and lay there wriggling and clapping her hands for joy. At last she managed to ask: "Do you not know what a cock's business is?" "As Allah lives, I did not know that it had any business," I answered. Then said she: "A cock's business, dear Aziz, is to eat, drink, and couple."

I was confused to hear her speak in this way, and said: "I have never heard of that being a business." "It is the best business in life, my dear," she an-

swered. "Be a man, rise up, tighten your belt, fortify your loins, and go to it: hard, dry and long." With this she cried out to her mother, who entered with four official witnesses carrying lighted torches. They came forward with ceremonious bowings and sat down in a circle.

The girl lowered the veil over her face and wrapped herself in the izar, the great veil. The witnesses wrote out our contract in which my new mistress generously acknowledged that she had received from me a dowry of ten thousand dinars against all indebtedness past or future. She gave the customary fee to the witnesses, who left by the way they had come with renewed compliments. The mother also seemed to fade from view.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WE WERE ALONE in the great hall with the four glazed arcades.

The girl undressed herself and came to me with a thin chemise floating on her body. Ah, the things pictured in silk on that chemise! Also she had on limpid drawers, but these she let slip to her ankles and kicked away. She led me by the hand to the alcove and threw herself with me on the golden bed, panting and saying: "Now we may do it; now it is lawful!" She stretched herself yielding upon the silks and drew me

all against her. She groaned, she shivered, she giggled, and then she lifted her chemise right up above her belly.

I sucked her lips while she half fainted, half pulled herself back, and fluttered her eyelids; then I pierced her through and through. Thus I was able to check the charming exactness of the poet, who said:

*She was child, lifting her robe in the garden;
There was no sin a lover of love could not pardon,
It was as narrow as virtue, as easy as flying,
Yet I was half-way in when her petulant sighing
Stopped me. I asked: "Why, why?" And she said
with a laugh:
"Moon of my eyes, I sigh for the other half."*

When it was once done, she said: "Go as you wish, I am your slave. Go! Come! Take it! Give it! Right in! Back! My life, my life! Let me put it in myself!" She sighed and groaned among kisses and jumpings; I groaned and sighed with movement and multiple couplings until the noise of us filled the house and put all the street into an amaze. After that we slept together till morning.

As I was about to depart, she came to me with a wicked smile, saying: "Where are you going? Do you think that the door of freedom is as large as the door of entrance. Undeceive yourself, dear silly Aziz; do you take me for the Daughter of Wanton Dalila; have you forgotten that we are well and truly married and our contract confirmed by the Sunna? If you are drunk, my Aziz, become sober. The door of this house opens only one day in the year. Rise up and see if I am not speaking the truth. I jumped up in a fright and ran to the great door; it was locked.

barred, nailed up, and heavily chained. I returned to the girl and told her what I had seen. She smiled happily, saying: "We have a great abundance of flour here, with grains, fruits fresh and dried, preserved pomegranates, butter, sugar, jam, sheep, fowls, and the like; enough to last us for many years. Now I am as sure of your staying with me for a year as I am sure of life itself. So resign yourself and do not look so gloomy." I sighed, saying: "There is no power or help save in Allah!" "But what have you to complain of, dear fool? Why should you sigh when you have given me such abundant proof that you understand the business of a cock?" With that she laughed; and soon I was laughing too, for I could not help myself.

I stayed in that house, conducting the business of a cock, that is to say, eating, drinking, and making love, hard, dry, and long, for a whole year. By the end of the twelve months, she gave birth to a child; and, at about that time, I heard again the noise of the door groaning upon its hinges. Then in my heart I uttered a profound: "Ya Allah!" of thankfulness.

As soon as the door was open, I saw a number of slaves and porters running to and fro with fresh provisions for a further year: great loads of pastries, flour, sugar, and other necessities of the kind. I jumped to my feet and was making off as fast as I could towards liberty and the street when my wife took hold of my garments, saying: "Ungrateful Aziz! At least wait for the evening and the exact hour at which you came to me a year ago!" I constrained myself to be patient; but, as soon as evening came, I went towards the door. My wife came with me to the threshold and would not let me go till I had sworn to return before the door should be shut next morning. There-

fore I swore upon the Sword of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) and upon his Book, and upon his institution of Divorce.

I left the house and hastened towards the abode of my parents. The way lay past the garden of my mistress, whom my wife had called the Daughter of Wanton Dalila. I saw to my astonishment that the garden was open as of old and that the lantern shone in the shrubs.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I WAS UNCOMFORTABLY affected and then driven to anger by what I saw: "I have been away a year," I said to myself, "I come back unexpectedly to find everything as it was before. Even before seeing my mother who must have wept me for dead, I will find out what has happened to my mistress." With that I walked through the garden and came to the hall with the vaulted roof and the dome of ebony and ivory. I entered abruptly and found my mistress seated, bent over upon herself, her head near her knees and one of her cheeks supported on her hand. She was very pale, her eyes were moist with tears; I have never seen a face so sad. Suddenly she saw me; half bounded in the air, tried to rise, and then fell back upon her cushions. When she could speak, she cried in a loud voice: "Praise be to Allah, that you have come back, my Aziz!"

I was thrown into confusion by this joy which took no account of my infidelities and bowed my head. Then I went up to my mistress and kissed her, saying: "How did you know that I would come tonight?" "I did not know," she answered, "I have been waiting for a year; sitting thus every night in lonely tears. See how my vigils have wasted me. Aziz, I have waited ever since that day when I gave you the new silk robe and you promised to return after you had bathed. Tell me, my dear, what has kept you so long away from me?"

Then, my prince, I foolishly told her every circumstance of my adventure and of my marriage with the girl of the pre-eminent thighs. "Further," I added, "I must warn you that I have but one night to pass with you; because I must return to my wife before tomorrow morning, for I have sworn to do so by the three sacred things."

The young woman turned pale as if stricken into stone by indignation. At last she cried: "Miserable wretch! I was your first love and you give me less than one night! You give your mother nothing. Do you think that I am as patient as Aziza (whom Allah keep!); do you think that I am going to pine away and die because of your infidelities? Detestable Aziz! Nothing shall save you now! I have no reason for sparing you, since you are married and married men are horrible to me. You can serve me no longer; but I do not care that you should serve anyone else!"

She said these words in a voice which turned my blood to ice, while her eyes pierced me as if they had been made fire. Before I had time to think, ten young women slaves stronger than negroes hurled themselves upon me and threw me to the earth. My mistress rose and took a terrifying knife, saying to me: "We will

cut your throat as they do to bucks which are too much on heat. With one stroke I will avenge myself and the poor Aziza, whose heart you broke. Say your prayer, Aziz, for your time has come to die!" So saying, she leaned her knee on my forehead, while the slaves stopped my breath.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I GAVE MYSELF up for lost when I saw what the slaves were doing. Two sat on my belly, two held my feet, two sat across my knees; while my mistress with the help of two others beat me with a stick across the soles of the feet until I fainted from pain. As they rested, I came to myself, crying: "Rather death a thousand times than these tortures!"

As if to oblige me, the young woman took up the knife again and, sharpening it on her slipper, called to her slaves: "Stretch out his neck!"

Just at this fatal moment, Allah made me remember the last words of Aziza, and I called out:

*"Better, sweeter to die
Than deal in treachery."*

My mistress gave a cry of fear, and then screamed out: "Allah have pity on your soul, Aziza! You have saved your cousin from a terrible death."

She looked at me, saying: "As for you, whom Aziza has saved again with her saying, do not think that you will get off scot-free. I must revenge myself on you and the wicked wanton who has stolen you. There is but one way." Then to the slaves she cried: "Help me! Tie his feet and do not let him move an inch!"

The slaves did as they were bid, while their mistress put a red copper pot on the fire, containing oil and soft cheese. When the cheese was well mixed into the boiling oil, she came back to me and pulled down my drawers; so that alternate waves of terror and shame shook me and I knew what was to happen. Having bared my belly, she took hold of my eggs and bound them at the root with the noose of a waxed cord; the ends of this cord she gave to two of her slaves, who bore strongly upon it, while she herself took up a razor and, with a single stroke, cut off my manhood.

I fainted with pain and despair, my lord. I only know that, when I came to myself, I saw that my front was like a woman's and that the slaves were even then applying the boiled oil and cheese to the wound. My blood soon stopped flowing; and my mistress came to me and gave me a cup of syrup for my thirst, saying scornfully: "Return whence you came! You are no use to me: I retain all that was ever valuable in you." She pushed me away with her foot and had me thrown out of the house, crying out after me: "Think yourself lucky that your head is still upon your shoulders!"

Sadly and painfully I dragged myself to my young wife's house; I found the door open and entered silently. As soon as I had thrown myself heavily upon the cushions of the great hall, my wife ran to me and, finding me very pale, made me tell my story and show her my mutilation. I looked at my loss a second time, could not abide it, and fell into a swoon again.

When I came to myself, I found myself in the street outside the great door; for my wife also had no further use for me now that I was no more than a woman.

I climbed wretchedly to my feet and tottered towards my father's house. Reaching it at length I threw myself into the arms of my mother, who had long wept me as dead or lost irrevocably.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MY MOTHER RECEIVED me with sobs and, seeing my mortal pallor and great weakness, began to weep afresh. A memory suddenly came over me of my sweet Aziza, the poor girl who had died of heartbreak without one word of reproach. For the first time, I truly regretted her and wept tears of despair and repentance on her account. When I was a little calmer, my mother said to me: "Poor child, this is a house of misfortune; your father is dead." Sobs rose in my throat at this intelligence. I sat still for a moment and then fell face forward to the ground in a fit which lasted all night.

In the morning, my mother made me rise up and sat down by my side; but I stayed without speaking, looking ever at the corner where poor Aziza used to sit. Seeing the tears coursing down my face, my mother said: "Dear son, for ten days I have been alone in this house, empty of its master; ten days ago

your father passed into the infinite mercy of Allah." "Leave speaking of that till another time, my mother," I answered. "Just now all my soul is occupied with Aziza; I cannot consecrate my grief to any other end than her. Sweet cousin that I so neglected, you who loved me truly, pardon a wretch who tortured you now that he has been punished and more than punished for his sins!"

My mother saw that my grief was true and deep; but she kept silence, contenting herself with healing my wound and building up my strength. When she had done all she could, she watched over me tenderly, saying: "Allah is good, my son; for He has spared your life."

In the course of time, my body became completely well, though my soul was still in a state of fever. One day, after we had eaten, my mother sat down beside me, saying: "I think that the time has come, my son, when I may rightly give you the keepsake with which Aziza trusted me. Before she died, she made me swear not to hand it over to you until your grief was sincere and you were finally quit of the evil entanglement which kept you from her." So saying, she opened a coffer and took a packet from it; she undid the packet and handed me this second square of precious silk, embroidered with the other gazelle. As you may see, these verses are interlaced all round the edge:

You taught my heart to burn while yours was resting,

You taught my eyes to watch while your eyes slept;

Your careless head between my breasts lay nesting

And dreamed another woman while I wept.

Dig my grave deep and set this verse above:

"She fears not death because she has known love."

On reading those lines for the first time, I shed abundant tears and beat my cheeks in grief. As I unrolled the stuff a piece of paper fell out on which I saw lines traced in the hand of the dead Aziza.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THESE WERE THE lines traced in the hand of the dead Aziza:

“O dearest cousin, you are more precious to me than my life; after my death I will continue to pray to Allah that you may prosper and succeed in all you undertake. I know well the misfortunes which await you at the hands of the Daughter of Wanton Dalila. Let them be a lesson to you and root from your heart your evil love for treacherous and amorous women. I give thanks to Allah, who has taken me away so that I shall not see with my own eyes your suffering and despair.

“I pray you to keep this parting gift, this silk worked with a gazelle. It has kept me company during the long times you have been away. It was sent to me by the daughter of a king, the lady Donia, princess of the Isles of Camphor and Crystal.

“When misfortunes fall thick about you, depart in search of princess Donia, whom you shall find in her father’s kingdom, among the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. Only be quite certain, dear Aziz, that the

unequalled beauty and delight of this princess are not destined for your enjoying. Therefore do not fall in love with her; for it is not as a lover that she shall help you, but as a saviour from affliction.

“The peace of Allah be with you, O Aziz.”

My heart became all the more tender when I had read this letter, and I wept with my mother until night-fall. Thereafter, for a whole year, I kept the house in sluggish grief.

At the beginning of the second year, I began to make plans for going in search of Princess Donia to the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. In this my mother encouraged me, saying: “The long journey will distract you, my son, and drive away your grief. There is a caravan of merchants just ready to leave our city; I advise you to buy merchandise and join yourself to them. At the end of three years you will come back with the same caravan, quite cured of the grief which now oppresses you; and all my happiness will be to see you smile again.”

I did as my mother suggested. I bought valuable merchandise, joined the caravan, and set out with them; but I never had the courage to expose my merchandise for sale as my companions did. I used to sit apart each day; and, spreading these double squares in front of me, weep over them. After a year, we came to the frontiers of the kingdom reigned over by the father of Princess Donia; that is to say the Seven Isles of Camphor and Crystal.

The king of this territory was called Shahraman; and he was the father of that mistress Donia who knew so well how to make presents for her friends of gazelles embroidered upon silk.

When I reached his kingdom, I thought to myself: “Poor weak Aziz! What good can you be now to

princesses or even the commonest of girls? O poor flat-fronted Aziz!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-twenty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEVERTHELESS, AS I remembered Aziza's words, I began to make those enquiries and plans necessary for meeting with the king's daughter.

My efforts were in vain; no one could help me, no one could show me the way. As I was beginning to despair, a day came on which I walked among the gardens which surrounded the city, trying to forget my anxieties by the sight of the green, and came suddenly upon a garden gate, showing such wonderful trees that my heart leapt upwards. On the bench at the entrance was seated an old gardener with a pleasant face. I walked towards him and, after the usual greetings, asked him to whom the garden might belong. He answered me: "It belongs to the lady Donia, daughter of our king. You may if you wish walk about inside for a little while, my beautiful youth, to breathe the odour of the flowers and herbs." "I cannot thank you enough," I answered. "Would it be possible, O venerable old man, for me to hide behind one of the clusters of flowers and wait the coming of the princess? I merely wish to rejoice my eyes with a single glance at her." "That cannot be," he said. I sighed loudly at this answer, so that he looked upon

me with tenderness and, taking me by the hand, led me into the garden.

We walked up and down together and at last he led me into a charming alley shaded by wet leaves. He plucked the ripest and most delicate fruit for me, saying: "These will be good for you; only Princess Donia has tasted the like. Now sit down and I will return." He left me for a moment and came back with a roast lamb, of which he carved the tenderest parts for me in extreme benevolence. I was confused by his goodness and did not know how to thank him. As we sat eating and talking in great friendliness, we heard the creak of the garden gate. The old man said quickly: "Hide yourself among those flowers and do not move!"

I had scarcely obeyed him, when the head of a black eunuch appeared through the open gate, calling in a loud voice: "Old gardener, is there anyone here? Princess Donia is coming." "Chief of the palace, there is no one in the garden," answered my old friend, as he hastened to open the gate to its fullest extent.

Then, dear lord, I saw the lady Donia come through the gate as if the moon herself were entering the garden. Such was her beauty that I remained where I was as if I had been dead. I followed her with my looks without being able to breathe, although I ardently desired to speak to her; during the whole time of her walk, I stayed as a stone statue among the flowers, as one who has gone thirsting through the desert for many days and falls at last upon the borders of a lake without being able to drag himself to the cool water.

I understood then as never before that neither Princess Donia nor any other woman would ever again

run any danger from the pitiful thing I had become.

I waited till the princess left the garden; then I took leave of the old gardner and hastened to rejoin my caravan, saying to myself: "Ah, what have you become, O Aziz? A belly so smooth that it shall never tame a single girl. Go back to your mother, Aziz, and die in peace in the masterless house of your father; for life can mean no more to you." In spite of all the troubles and fatigues which I had undergone to reach the kingdom of Shahraman, my despair prevented me from following the advice of Aziza and ever attempting again to approach the lady Donia; who should, it was supposed, have brought me happiness.

I left with the caravan to return to my own country; and thus arrived in these lands which are ruled over by your father, king Sulayman Shah.

Such is my story.

When Prince Diadem heard this admirable tale . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that the wazir Dandan, who told all this tale to King Al-Makan during the siege of Constantinople, began, when he had finished the adventure of young Aziz, to tell the following story in which Aziz is also intimately bound with all the marvels you are going to hear:

THE TALE OF PRINCESS DONIA AND PRINCE DIADEM

WHEN PRINCE DIADEM heard this admirable tale and had learnt how desirable the mysterious Princess Donia was said to be, how beautiful she was and how expert in the art of silk embroidery, he fell into a passion for her which worked greatly in his heart. He resolved to adventure all in an attempt to meet her.

He wished never to be separated again from young Aziz and so took him with him when he journeyed back to the city of his father, Sulayman Shah, king of Green City and the mountains of Ispahan.

His first action was to place at the disposal of his friend, Aziz, a beautiful and fully appointed house. When he was sure that Aziz was provided with all he could possibly need, he returned to his father's palace and shut himself in his own room, refusing to see anyone. In that confinement he wept passionately; for things heard sometimes make a greater impression than things seen.

When Sulayman Shah understood from the change in his son's complexion that care sat upon his heart, he asked him the reason of it. Prince Diadem told him that he was in love with the lady Donia, passionately desirous of one whom he had never seen, the slave of a word-picture of Aziz: of a gracious walk, dark eyes, and fingers skilled in the needlework of flowers and animals.

Sulayman Shah was exceedingly perplexed and said to his son: "The Isles of Camphor and Crystal are very far from us and though the lady Donia be a marvellous princess, our own city and your mother's

palace have fine girls in plenty and fair slaves from all over the earth. Take a walk through the women's apartments and choose any of the five hundred unparalleled beauties you will find there. If none of the women please you, I will find you a wife among the daughters of my neighbouring kings and I promise you that she shall be more beautiful and cleverer than the lady Donia." "My father," answered Diadem, "I only wish to marry Princess Donia; she who is so skilful in portraying gazelles upon brocade. If I cannot marry her, I will flee from my country and kill myself because of her."

His father saw that it would be harmful to deny him, so he said: "Have patience and I will send a deputation to the king of the Isles of Camphor and Crystal to ask his daughter's hand in regular fashion, such as I used in begging the hand of your mother for myself. If he refuses, I will powder the earth of his kingdoms and bring his cities about his head in ruin, after sacking them with an army, whose vanguard shall have reached the Isles of Camphor while the rearguard is still this side of the mountains of Ispahan of my empire." The king sent for the young merchant, Aziz, his son's friend, and learned by questioning him that he knew the way to the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. Then said the king: "I would be indeed grateful if you would accompany my grand-wazir, whom I am sending to the king of those places." "I hear and I obey," answered Aziz.

Sulayman Shah called his grand-wazir to him, saying: "Arrange this affair for my son as you think best; I wish you to set out as soon as possible for the Isles of Camphor and Crystal to ask for the king's daughter in marriage for Diadem." The wizar answered that he would do so; but Diadem, who was in

a fever of impatience, retired to his own apartment, reciting these verses of the poet upon the pains of love:

*Mournful numbers played on my heart-strings,
Played by grief:
Night, the thief,
Night will tell you of these things.*

*Sleepless shepherds counting every star
Are my eyes:
Night, the wise,
Night will tell you that they are,*

*I am as lonely as an aching woman
Whom no man seed answers to:
Night, eternal and inhuman,
Night will tell you this is true.*

He stayed dreaming all night, refusing nourishment and sleep. When day dawned, his father hastened to find him and, seeing him paler and more out of countenance than the day before, hastened the preparations for the departure of Aziz and the wazir, swiftly charging them with rich presents for the king of the Isles of Camphor and Crystal and all his court.

Without an hour's delay the two set out and, after a journey of many days, reached the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. They pitched their tents on the bank of a river and sent forward a messenger to announce their arrival to the king; the day had not ended before chamberlains and emirs came out to meet them, who welcomed them cordially with many bows, and led them to the king's palace.

Aziz and the wazir entered and gave their rich

presents from Sulayman Shah into the hands of the king. He thanked them, saying: "Upon my head and in my eyes, I accept these with a friendly heart." Then according to custom, Aziz and the wazir retired and rested for five days in the palace from the fatigues of their journey.

On the morning of the sixth day, the wazir dressed himself in his robe of honour and went alone to present himself before the king. He submitted the request of his master and stood in silent respect to wait the answer. When he heard the wazir's words, the king became very anxious all of a sudden and hung his head; for a long time he remained in dreamy perplexity, not knowing what answer to give to the envoy of the powerful king of Green City and the Mountains of Ispahan. For he knew that his daughter held marriage in horror and would indignantly refuse this new offer, as she had already refused to those from the princes of neighbouring kingdoms.

At last the king lifted his head and signed to his chief of eunuchs to approach him, saying: "Go at once to your mistress, the lady Donia, present the homage of this wazir to her and the presents which he has brought us and repeat to her exactly the request that you have heard him make."

The eunuch kissed the earth between the king's hands and disappeared, but at the end of an hour he returned with his nose hanging over his feet, and said: "O king of the centuries and of time, I obtained an audience with my mistress, the lady Donia; but hardly had I hinted at the request of our lord the wazir when her eyes blazed with anger. She jumped from her seat and, seizing a mace, ran at me to break my head. I fled as quickly as I could, but she pursued me through the doors with these cries: 'If my father insists on

my marrying after all that has happened, let him be assured that my husband shall never look upon my face unveiled. I will kill him with my own hand and myself afterwards.' "

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that, when all had heard the words of the chief eunuch, the princess's father said to the wazir: "You have heard with your own ears. I beg you take my respectful salutations to King Sulayman Shah and report the matter to him, explaining how horrified my daughter is at the thought of marriage. Allah bring you to your journey's end in all security!"

Aziz and the wazir hastened to return to Green City and report to Sulayman Shah what they had heard. The king flew into a great passion of anger and wished to give immediate orders to his emirs and lieutenants to mass their troops and hurl them against the Isles of Camphor and Crystal.

But the wazir asked leave to speak, and said: "My king, this should not be done; for it is the daughter's fault and not the father's. The unsuccess of our enterprise was due to her alone. Her father is as angry as you are. Besides, I have told you of the terrible threat which she sent us by the frightened chief eunuch."

Sulayman Shah admitted the right of this, and suddenly began to fear lest the vengeance of the princess should fall upon his son. He said to himself: "If I sack their land and take the girl captive, that would not advantage us, since she has sworn to kill herself."

He called Prince Diadem to him and, in a voice sad with the sorrow which he knew he was about to inflict, told him what had happened. But the prince was far from despairing. He said in a firm tone to his father: "My lord, do not think I will leave things as they were: I swear by Allah that the lady Donia shall be my wife. I will come by her in my own way, even at the risk of my life." "How is that?" asked the king. "I will go and seek her in the guise of a merchant," answered Diadem.

"In that case," said the king after consideration, "take the wazir and Aziz with you." He bought a hundred thousand dinars' worth of rich merchandise and gave them to his son, at the same time emptying into the saddlebags many treasures from his own presses. He presented him besides with a hundred thousand dinars in gold, with horses, camels, and mules, and sumptuous tents lined with many-coloured silks.

Diadem kissed his father's hands, dressed himself for his journey, and went to find his mother; she gave him a hundred thousand dinars and wept much, calling down upon him the blessing of Allah for the satisfaction of his soul and his safe return. The five hundred women of the palace also wept noisily about the prince's mother and then stood silent, regarding her with tender respect.

Leaving his mother, Diadem sent for Aziz and the old wazir and gave the order for departure. Seeing that Aziz wept at this, he asked him the reason of

his tears and the youth replied: "Brother, I feel that I never can be separated from you and yet it is a long time since I left my poor mother. When the caravan which I was with reaches my country, what will she do?" "Take no thought of that," said the Prince, "you shall return home as soon as Allah wills, after we have successfully concluded our adventure."

The three set out and voyaged for many days. The wise wazir distracted the two young men with excellent tales and Aziz both recited and improvised charming verses on lovers and the pains of love. This was one of a thousand:

*You're going to laugh, my friends,
To hear how loving ends
In second babyhood:
Stretched on a golden rack,
I cannot sleep for lack
Of white breasts and their good.*

At the end of a month they arrived at the capital of the Isles of Camphor and Crystal. As they entered the great market, Diadem felt the weight of his cares lighten within him and his heart beat joyously. On the advice of Aziz they dismounted at the great khan and hired for themselves all the shops on the ground floor and all the rooms above, until such time as the wazir should obtain a house for them in the city. In the shops they disposed their bales of merchandise and, after resting for four days in the khan, went to visit the merchants of the chief silk market.

As they walked there, the wazir said to the other two: "Before we can attain our object there is one thing which we must do." "Tell us what that is," they answered, "for old men are fruitful in inspira-

tion; especially when, like you, they have been trained in policy." "My idea is," said the wazir, "that instead of leaving all our goods shut up in the khan where no one can see them, we ought to open a large shop for you, my prince, in the silk market itself. You will stay at the entrance to show and sell your goods, while Aziz remains at the back of the shop to pass you the fabrics and unroll them. As you are exceedingly beautiful and Aziz is not less so, in a very short time your shop will be the most popular in the market." "That is an excellent idea," said Diadem; and, dressed just as he was in his beautiful robe, he entered the silk market followed by Aziz, the wazir, and all their slaves.

When the merchants saw Diadem passing, they were stricken into inactivity by his beauty and ceased to attend to their customers; those who were cutting silk stopped with their scissors in the air; those who were buying forgot their parcels; some asked themselves: "Has not the porter Raduan, who holds the keys of the gardens of Paradise, forgotten to shut the gates? Has not this youth escaped that way?" Others exclaimed: "Ya Allah! we did not know that angels were so beautiful!"

They enquired where the chief merchant might be found, and went straight to his shop. Those who were sitting there rose in their honour, thinking: "This venerable old man is the father of these beautiful youths." The wazir asked for the chief merchant and, on his being pointed out, saw a tall old man with a white beard, a dignified expression, and a smiling mouth. This personage hastened to do the honours of his shop with many cordial expressions of welcome; he bade them sit upon the carpet at his side, and said: "I am ready to help you in any way I can."

Then said the wazir: "Urbane chief merchant, for some years I have been travelling with these two boys through many cities and far countries: to teach them the diversity of peoples, to complete their education, and instruct them in the arts of buying, selling, and taking advantage of the various customs among which they find themselves. We have come to spend some time in this place, so that my children may rejoice in the beauty of your city and learn politeness from its inhabitants. We beg you, therefore, to let us some spacious and well-situated shop, where we may traffic in the goods of our own far country."

"It will be a great pleasure to do this for you," answered the chief merchant; and so saying he turned towards the two young men that he might see what they were like. A single glance at their beauty threw him into a measureless sea of confusion; for he openly and madly adored young men, preferring boys to girls and regaling himself with the sharp taste of immaturity.

Thinking to himself: "Glory and praise to Him who created and moulded these exquisite creatures from lifeless dust!" he rose and, treating them as if he had been their slave, put himself entirely at their disposition. He showed them many shops and ended by choosing one for them right in the middle of the market. It was the fairest and best lighted of all; it had greater accommodation and was more advantageously situated than any; it was built in a gay and handsome style, with fronts of carved wood, and alternate shelves of ivory, ebony and crystal. The street outside was well swept and watered; and their door was the one chosen by preference at night for the market guard to lean against. After payment had been made, the chief merchant gave the keys to the

wazir, saying: "Allah bless and prosper your shop from this white day. May the young men do well."

The wazir had all the merchandise, silks, brocades, and the inestimable treasures from the presses of Sulayman Shah, carried to the shop and carefully arranged there. When this work was over, he took the two young men with him to bathe in the hammam which stood near the great gate of the market. It was well known for its cleanliness, its shining marble, and the five steps which led up to it, on which the wooden clogs were ranged in order.

As the two friends took their bath quickly and were in great haste to reach their shop, they did not wait for the wazir to finish his; but joyously left the building. The first person they met was the chief merchant, who was passionately waiting on the steps for them to come out.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE BATH HAD given the last touch of perfection to their beauty and fresh colouring; the old man compared them in his soul with two fawns. He saw that the roses had come to full bloom in their cheeks, that midnight had returned upon their eyes, that they were like two slender branches covered with their fruit or two moons milky and sweet. He recalled these lines of the poet:

*Seeing that a simple pressure of the hand
Can make my senses stand,
What if I saw your body, where unite
The lure of water and the gold of light?*

He went up to them and said: "My children, I hope that you enjoyed your bath; may Allah never take its benefit from you, but renew it eternally." Diadem answered in his most charming way: "Would that we might have shared that pleasure with you." The two young men pressed in respectfully about the old man and walked before him because of his age and rank, opening up a path and leading him towards their shop.

As they were going in front of him, he was able to see the beauty of their walking and the movement of their haunches below their robes. With shining eyes, unable to repress his transports, he sighed and snuffed and recited these doubtful lines:

*If I see their solid bodies tremble,
Tremble a little and burn;
Do not the great stars, which they resemble,
Move glittering as they turn?*

Though they heard these words the two youths were far from understanding the lechery of the chief merchant; rather they thought that he was but treating them with civility; and, being touched by the honour, they attempted to persuade him, as a mark of friendship, to accompany them to the bath again. The old man refused a little, for form's sake, and then accepted with his heart on fire.

When they entered, the wazir, who was drying himself in one of the private apartments, saw them and came out to them as far as the central basin where

they had paused. He warmly invited the chief merchant to enter his own apartment; but the old man excused himself, saying that this was too much honour. Then Diadem and Aziz took him, each by a hand, and led him to their own apartment while the wazir retired to his.

As soon as they were alone, Aziz and Diadem undressed the old man, after taking off their own clothes, and began to rub him energetically, while he cast furtive burning glances at both of them. Diadem swore that to him should fall the honour of soaping and Aziz requested that for him should be reserved the honour of pouring water from the little copper basin. Between the two of them, the chief merchant thought that he had reached Paradise already.

They went on rubbing, soaping, and pouring water until the wazir arrived to the great dissatisfaction of the old man. They sponged him with warm napkins, then dried him with cool perfumed ones, and lastly, when they had dressed him, set him upon the dais and offered him musked sherberts with rose-water.

The old man pretended to take an interest in what the wazir was saying; but in reality he had only eyes for the two youths, coming and going gracefully to serve him. When the wazir made him those salutations which are usual after the bath, he answered: "Your entry into our city is a blessing upon us, a blessing and a great pleasure!" and he recited this poem:

*They came: our hills put on their green
And the yellow flower of the sun to bloom again.
"Ah, good-bye pain,
For frost is dead
And the first violet seen."
We said.*

The three thanked him for his urbanity, and he replied: "May Allah grant all of you the life you desire and preserve your beautiful children from the evil eye, O illustrious merchant!" "And may, by Allah's grace," replied the merchant, "your bath give you a double portion of health and strength. Is not water the true beatitude of life upon this earth? Is not the hammam the house of joy?" "By Allah, that is so!" returned the chief merchant. "The bath has inspired some of our greatest poets to admirable lengths. Do you know some of their compositions?"

Diadem was the first to cry: "Listen to this:

*Hammam of delicious bathing,
Admirable, sense-defying;
Silver vapour, scented plaything,
Half to die and after dying
Half to live in sleepy swathing,
Hammam of delicious bathing."*

Then Aziz cried: "I also know a poem about the hammam." "Rejoice our ears with it," said the chief merchant; and Aziz rythmically recited:

*Take from the lichened rocks their broideries
And set them round delightful heat,
With golden breasts and silver feet,
That is the hammam bath complete:
And of all sweet
Gold's paradise devoid is.*

As he made an end of his recitation, Aziz sat down beside Diadem. The chief merchant marvelled at their talent and cried: "As Allah lives, you know

how to combine beauty with eloquence. Let me, in my turn, say certain lines to you, or rather sing them; for the rhythms of our songs are made manifest in music." He leaned his head on his hand, half shut his eyes, wagged his head a little, and sang:

*As the hammam fire renews
Ageing heart and tired thews,
I lie and love the kissing air,
The brightness of the basins there,
Falling water, falling light
On the marble hard and white,
Rooms of shadows filled with blue
Wreaths of incense, driven through
By a breeze which carries too
All the sweet the furnace sends
From the bodies of my friends.
Eternal shade, eternal heat,
There's analogy complete,
Hammam, dark for all your fires,
Of my soul and my desires.*

Then the old man looked at the youths, allowed his soul to wander for a moment in the garden of their beauty and, thus inspired, recited these two stanzas:

*They welcomed me with silent smiling,
They warmed me at their fire,
I found their manners most beguiling
At the hammam.*

*Though none of them are my relations,
They give all I require,
Good company, sweet conversations,
At the hammam.*

After this song and recitation, they could not but be charmed at the old man's art; so they thanked him with effusion and, as night was falling, accompanied him to the door of the hammam. He tried hard to persuade them to sup with him at his house, but they excused themselves and took their leave, while the old man stood still and looked after them.

They entered their rooms in the khan and, after eating and drinking, slept all night in perfect happiness. In the morning they rose and made ablution and prayer; then, as soon as the market was open, hastened to their shop and entered it for the first time.

The slaves had arranged the place with considerable taste, stretching out the silks to their best advantage and setting in convenient places two royal carpets worth a thousand dinars and two gold cushions worth a hundred. On the ivory, ebony, and crystal shelves the merchandise and kingly treasures were skilfully displayed.

Diadem sat on one of the carpets, Aziz on the other, and the wazir placed himself between the two in the exact centre of the shop; the slaves stood round, rivalling each other in the speed with which they fulfilled the least command of their masters.

Soon the people of the city heard of this admirable shop and customers hurried to it from all parts, eager to receive their purchases from the hand of the young man Diadem, the fame of whose beauty had turned all heads. The wazir saw that all was going very well, so he recommended great discretion to the two young men and went to repose himself at the khan.

Things went on in this way until Diadem, seeing and hearing nothing of Princess Donia, began to get im-

patient; and finally despaired so utterly that he lost all his sleep.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY, HOWEVER, as he was talking over his griefs with Aziz in the front of the shop, an old woman passed through the market, most respectfully dressed in a large black satin veil. Her attention was speedily attracted by the wonderful shop and the beauty of the young merchant who kept it; her emotion was so great that she straightway wetted her drawers. Looking earnestly at the young man, she said to herself: "That is no mortal but an angel or some king of the countries of dream!" She came up to the shop and saluted Diadem, who returned her greeting and, on a sign from Aziz, rose in her honour and smiled upon her most agreeably. He invited her to sit upon the carpet and, taking his place by her side, fanned her until she was well rested from the fatigue of her walk.

Then the old woman said to Diadem: "My child, my graceful and altogether perfect young man, do you belong to this country?" In his most winning voice, the prince answered: "As Allah lives, my mistress, I have never set foot in this place before. I have come on a visit of pleasure and only keep this shop as a way of passing the time." "Welcome to our city!" said the old woman. "What far merchandise

have you brought with you? Let me see the most beautiful; for beauty can draw beauty." Touched by her words, Diadem smiled his thanks, saying: "I have nothing in the shop save things which ought to please you; for they are worthy of kings' daughters and ladies such as yourself." "I wish to buy some exquisite piece of stuff to make a robe for Princess Donia, daughter of Shahraman our king," said the old woman.

Hearing the name of her he loved, Diadem called to Aziz in a trembling voice: "Bring me the fairest thing we have!" Aziz opened a cupboard constructed in the wall and took from it a single packet. But what a packet! The outside wrapping was of damask velvet fringed with heavy nuts of gold; lightly painted with designs of flowers and birds, which had in their middle an elephant dancing abandonedly. The whole gave forth a soul satisfying perfume. Aziz brought it to Diadem, who unrolled it and took from it a length of material, which had been woven with the intention that it should make a single-piece garment for some princess of fable or girl of Paradise. Only poets in their cadent verses could describe it to you; without its covering it was worth at least a hundred thousand dinars. Diadem unrolled it slowly before the gaze of the old woman, who hardly knew whether to look at it or the black eyes of him who offered it. The youthful charms of the merchant warmed her old flesh and compressed her thighs with fever, so that she would willingly have scratched between them there and then. When she could speak, she looked at Diadem through eyes moist with passion, and saying: "It will do. How much do I owe you?" "I am paid in meeting you," he answered bowing; and she cried: "Adorable boy, happy indeed will be the woman who lies in your lap

and holds your body in her arms! But what woman would be worthy of you? I know but one. Tell me, young fawn, what name you are known by?" "I am called Diadem," he replied, and the old woman exclaimed: "But that is a name given only to the sons of kings!"

Aziz, who had so far said no word, now answered for his embarrassed friend: "He is the only son of very loving parents, who wished to give him such a name as kings bear." "Indeed," replied the old woman, "if beauty herself were to choose a king, I think that his name would be Diadem. This poor old woman is your slave for ever more, O Diadem, and Allah is a witness of her devotion. I hope that you will soon find some way by which I can repay you. In the meanwhile, Allah protect you!" With that she took the precious packet and went her way

The old woman, who had nursed the lady Donia as a baby and stood to her in the place of a mother, came in to her, still excited by her recent encounter, and stood, holding the packet beneath her arm. When Donia asked what it was, she unrolled the stuff suddenly, saying: "Look!"; then the princess cried, with joyful eyes: "How beautiful, how beautiful, good Dudu! Surely it was never woven in this country?" "It is, as you say, beautiful," answered the old woman, "I would like to hear what you would say if you saw the beauty of the young merchant who gives it to you. The Porter Taduan has forgotten to shut the gates of Eden, and one of the immortals has escaped to rejoice the liver of God's creatures. How I long to see that radiant young man asleep upon your breasts!" "Enough, good nurse!" interrupted Donia. "What smoke has obscured your mind that you dare to speak to me of man? Be quiet, and give me the robe." She

took the stuff, caressed it with her fingers and draped it about her form, posturing before the nurse, who said to her: "It makes you look very beautiful; but two is beauty, one is not. O Diadem . . . !" "You are bewitched, naughty Dudu!" cried Donia. "Say no more, but go to the merchant and ask him to make some request so that the king, my father, may recompense him for this robe." The old woman burst out laughing and winked, saying: "A request? I believe you! Which of us has not a request?" With that she rose up and ran to Diadem's shop.

Diadem saw her coming and his heart turned over in his breast for joy; he seated her by his side, and waited upon her with sherbert and jams. At last the old woman said: "I bring you good news; my mistress salutes you with these words: 'You have honoured our city in your coming and have illuminated it. If you have any request, make it.'"

Diadem rejoiced, taking great draughts of air into his breast, thinking that his object was already won. He said to the old woman: "I have but one request: that you will take a letter to the lady Donia and bring me back an answer." Aziz brought Diadem a copper writing set, and the prince wrote this letter in cadenced verse:

*I void my heart on this white page,
Things coloured of my heart:
A golden thought of fires that rage,
A green thought hid apart,*

*A crimson thought of villenage,
A purple thought of art;
To weave a rainbow wish which says:
Oh, let us meet. I count the days.*

As a signature he wrote:

*Despite the lovers of this age
And all who may come after them,
Your postulant dares to sign this page:
The merchant Diadem.*

He read this letter over, sanded it, sealed it; and slipped it into the old woman's hand with a purse of a thousand dinars. The nurse hurried to her mistress, who said: "Tell me, good Dudu, what the young merchant wants and I will go to my father and beg it for him." "Indeed, I do not know what he wants," answered Dudu. "He has sent a letter, but I am ignorant of what is in it."

When Princess Donia had read the love letter, she cried: "How dares this audacious merchant lift his eyes so high? He should be hung at the gate of his own shop!" She beat her cheeks with her hands, and the old woman asked innocently: "Does he ask too high a price?" "Price?" said Donia, "He speaks of nothing but love and passion!" "That is certainly very audacious of him," said Dudu. "You ought to send him some sharp answer." "But will not that encourage him?" asked the princess. "No, it will bring him to his senses," returned Dudu. Therefore the lady Donia wrote these verses:

*You who have fought not, have not taken scars,
Would feed your appetite,
As if it were a thing of every night
To reach the stars:*

*To reach the silver maidens of the sky
Whose shy virginity God made to last for ever.*

*Try but once more to come at me,
I swear I'll crucify
The heart of that endeavour
Upon an unblessed tree.*

The old woman ran with this letter to Diadem, who read it with a lengthening face, and said sadly to her: "She threatens me with death; but I do not fear that when she makes my life unendurable. I will answer her, even though I lose all." "By your dear life," replied the dame, "I will help you with all my might and share the risk with you. Write your letter and give it to me." So Diadem, calling to Aziz: "Give our good mother a thousand dinars, and trust in God!" sat down and wrote the following lines:

*She lacks in skill who threatens death
When longing ceases with the breath;
She lacks in wisdom who debars
A heart adventuring to the stars.
Rather than let her triumph, we
Will choose the dark for sanctuary;
Rather than let her say: "On earth
Stays one who dares and was not worth."
I'll set my undesirous feet
To tread down death with laughter;
Since to that rash and dark retreat
She cannot follow after.*

He handed his letter to the old woman, saying: "Do not run any unnecessary risk for yourself; for I fear that nothing but death is left for me." "Banish such mournful thoughts and false presentiments," answered Dudu. "Are you not like the sun? Is she not like the moon? Very well then. Do you think that I, who

have spent all my life among love intrigues, am going to fail to unite such constellations? Be of good cheer; I will soon be back with joyful news."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

DUDU HID THE letter in her hair and, entering Donia's apartment, kissed her hand in silence and sat down. In a few minutes she said: "Dear child, my hair is all in disorder, and I am too tired to arrange it. I pray you send for one of your slaves that she may comb it for me." "Good Dudu," answered the princess, "I will comb your hair myself, for you have often combed mine." With that she took down the white tresses of her nurse and was spreading them for the comb when the letter fell out on the carpet.

Donia wished to pick it up, but her nurse cried: "Give me back that paper, my child. It must have fallen among my hair while I was in the young merchant's shop. I will return it to him." But Donia opened the paper and read its contents; her eyebrows rose, and she cried; "This is one of your tricks, you wicked Dudu! Who has sent this calamitous merchant to vex me? From what ill-omened country does he come? How can I ever look at a man whose country is not mine, who is of another blood to our people? Did I not tell you that my answer would embolden him?" "Indeed," answered the cunning nurse, "he

is a very Satan; his audacity comes straight from Hell. And yet, my child, I would suggest that you write him a final letter. I myself will guarantee that he becomes submissive; if he does not, let him perish, and me with him." Princess Donia took her pen and marshalled these words rhythmically together:

*There are hidden streams whose courses
No one forces,
Places hidden in the snows
No one knows,
Pastured stars whose silver beaches
No one reaches,
Houris for the dead to tumble
None may fumble;
And the black crows make a tomb,
Fifty flying graves of gloom,
To engulf no matter whom.*

She gave this letter to old Dudu, who ran with it to Diadem on the following morning.

Diadem read the hard words of the letter and understood that hope had no further excuse for staying lighted in his heart. Turning to Aziz, he said: "Tell me what to do now, my brother; for I have no inspiration left with which to send her a final answer." "Let me write in your name," said Aziz. "Do so, and be as trenchant as you can," returned Diadem. So Aziz took a paper and composed these lines:

*I am safer with Allah,
For though he regards me not,
The black-eyed disdainful one
He also regards not.
Foolish girl,*

*Would you set yourself against God?
I left my home for you;
But there is One who can deny you a home for ever.
Look to it, therefore.*

Diadem read over these verses when Aziz had written them and, finding them excellent, gave them to the old woman, who forthwith departed.

The anger of the princess burned hot against her nurse when she had read this last letter. "Wicked nurse!" she cried. "Calamitous Dudu! It is you who have brought all these humiliations upon me. I never wish to see your ill-omened face again! If you do not depart at once, my slaves shall cut your body into strips with their lashes and I will break your bones under my heels!" The old nurse ran out precipitately and hastened to confide her news and herself to the two friends.

Diadem was overcome with grief; he touched the old woman gently upon the chin, saying: "As Allah lives, my mother, my sorrows are doubled that you should have come into this pass because of me." "Do not be anxious, my son," she replied, "I have by no means given up hope. It shall never be said that I could not bring two lovers together when I set my mind to it. The greater the difficulty, the more my cunning; we shall win through yet." "Can you tell me," asked Diadem, "what caused the lady Donia's horror of men?" "It was a dream she had," answered the old woman. "Only a dream!" cried Diadem. "Only a dream," said Dudu. "Now listen:

"One night, as Princess Donia slept, she saw a fowler spreading his nets in a clearing of the woods. When he had sprinkled grains of corn about them on the earth, he hid himself and waited.

“Soon birds flew from every quarter of the forest and alighted among the nets. With them were two pigeons, a male and a female, who pecked the corn. As the male fed, he moved in circles about the female without taking any care to avoid the toils: so that, at last, one of his feet was taken in a mesh, which tangled about it and imprisoned all his body. The rest of the birds, frightened by the beating of his wings, flew away.

“But the female had no other thought than to deliver her lover. With head and beak she worked so quickly and so well that she cut through the net and freed the foolish male before the fowler had time to come forward and take it. They flew away together and, after circling the air for some time, lit again among the nets to eat the corn.

“As before the male began to wheel round the female, so that she was compelled to back away from his advances; in doing so, she also got taken in the nets. The male flew away without a thought for his mistress, so that the fowler came and cut her throat.

“Princess Donia woke in tears from this dream and told it to me in a trembling voice. She said in conclusion: ‘All males are alike, and men are worse than animals; a woman need hope nothing from their eternal selfishness. I swear before Allah that I will never submit to the abomination of their approach!’”

“But, my mother,” said the prince to the old nurse, “did you not tell her that all men are not like that traitorous pigeon, and that many women are quite unlike his virtuous mate?” “Nothing would alter her opinion,” answered Dudu, “she lives alone, adoring her own beauty.” “You must help me to see her just once, even if I die for it,” answered Diadem. “Do

that for me out of the abundance of your cleverness, and I will bless your name for ever."

"Light of my eyes," said Dudu, "there is a garden at the back of the palace where the princess lives. It is reserved for her and she goes there once a month by a little secret door. In a week from today the time will have come for her to walk there; I myself will guide you to the place and bring you into her presence. I am certain that, once she has seen you, none of her prejudices will be able to stand out against your beauty: for love is a gift from Allah and comes when it pleases Him."

Diadem breathed a little more easily at this intelligence. He thanked the old woman and begged her to accept their hospitality. Then he shut the shop and all three returned to the lodgings in the khan. As they walked, Diadem said to Aziz: "My brother, I will have no more leisure to go down to the shop. Therefore, I give it up to you. Do as you will with it."

They came to the khan and hastened to tell the wazir all that had happened, informing him of the princess's dream and of their plan for meeting her in the garden.

The wazir reflected for some time, and then said: "I have found the solution. Let us go to this garden and learn our way about it." Leaving the old woman in the khan, he walked with Diadem and Aziz towards the princess's garden. When they came near, they saw the old gardener sitting by the door. He greeted them, and the wazir slipped a hundred dinars into his hands, saying: "Good uncle, we wish to refresh ourselves in this beautiful garden, and eat a little near the flowers and water. We are strangers who are always on the look-out for beautiful places in which to

enjoy ourselves." The old man took the money, saying: "Enter, dear guests, and take your ease, while I run to buy some food from the market." He led them into the garden and then left them, returning in a very short time with a roast sheep and a quantity of pastries. They all sat down in a circle beside a little stream and ate their fill. Then said the wazir to the gardener: "Old man, that palace in front of us seems very dilapidated. Why do you not have it repaired?" "By Allah," answered the gardener, "it belongs to Princess Donia; she would let it tumble to pieces rather than occupy it: she lives too far retired to pay attention to such details." "That is a pity, good uncle," said the wazir, "the ground floor, at least, ought to be whitened up a little if only for your sake. If you like I will pay the cost of the repairs myself." "May Allah hear you!" said the delighted gardener. The wazir continued: "Take these further hundred dinars for your trouble and fetch us some masons and a skilled painter with an eye for colour."

It was not long before the gardener brought the masons and the painter who, under the direction of the wazir, repaired and whitened the great hall of the ground floor. Then the painter set to work and devised a forest scene: there was a glade in the centre having bird-nets in which a pigeon fluttered and could not escape. When this was finished, the wazir said: "Now paint the same thing on the other side; but show also a male pigeon delivering his mate and captured at the the same time by the fowler. Let him fall a victim to his devotion." The painter executed this second picture and departed with a large reward.

The wazir, the two young men, and the gardener

sat down to judge the effect and tone of the pictures. But Diadem was still sad; he examined the scenes in a dreamy fashion, and then said to Aziz: "My brother, recite me some more verses to divert the bitterness of my thoughts." Straightway Aziz said:

*Bin-Sinar in his book of cure
Says: "Children, know that this is sure:
Love can be cured by constant song
And wine the garden side along."
I took Bin-Sinar's sure advice
And came no nearer paradise;
Therefore I set myself to try
A leaf from my own pharmacy,
And in a hundred sleepless nights
Assuaged as many appetites.
Sinar was wrong, for I can prove
Love is the only cure for love.*

"Perhaps the poet was right," said Diadem, "but it is difficult, when the will is lacking for such a cure as that." After this, the three said good-bye to the gardener and returned to their lodgings to speak with the old nurse.

When the week had passed, the lady Donia wished to take her usual walk in the garden; but she felt the lack of her old nurse and began to think that she had been inhuman to one who stood to her in the place of a mother. She sent a slave to the market and another slave to all the acquaintances of Dudu to find her and bring her back. Now the nurse, after telling Diadem where to meet her in the garden, had started to walk towards the palace; therefore one of the slaves met her and respectfully begged her to return to her mistress. After a little feigned

reluctance, Dudu ran to Donia who kissed her upon the cheeks; and both of them, followed by a group of slaves, went through the small secret door into the garden.

After Dudu had left them, the wazir and Aziz had dressed Diadem in a robe of royal magnificence worth five thousand dinars, and fastened his waist with a belt of wrought gold clasped with an emerald clasp. They put a turban of white silk upon his head, with gold pictures on it and a diamond spray. Then they called down the blessings of Allah upon him and led him to within sight of the garden, themselves returning so that he might enter the more easily.

Diadem found the good old gardener at the door and greeted him cordially. The gardener answered his salute with great respect and, as he did not know that the princess had entered the garden by the secret door, said to the young man: "The garden is yours and I am your slave." He opened the door, let the prince pass through, and shut it again. Afterwards he sat down in his accustomed place, thanking Allah for the diversity of His creatures.

Diadem hid himself behind a cluster of flowers which the old woman had described to him and set himself to wait until she should pass.

As they walked, the old woman said to Donia: "Mistress, I have something to tell you which will heighten your delight in these fair trees, sweet fruits, and shining flowers." "I am ready to listen to you, my good Dudu," answered Donia; so the old woman continued: "First you should send back all these slaves to the palace; they are only in the way and prevent your full enjoyment of this pleasant air." "What you say is true, dear nurse," replied Donia; and forthwith dismissed her slaves; thus she was alone with

the old woman as she advanced towards the cluster of flowers behind which Diadem was hiding.

So Diadem saw Princess Donia and learned to know her beauty and fainted away in the place where he stood concealed. Donia walked on and drew near the hall where the wazir had had the pictures of the fowler painted. At Dudu's suggestion, she entered it for the first time: never before had she been curious to visit a place reserved for her servants.

The double picture perplexed her a great deal, and she cried: "Look, Dudu! There is my dream in opposite! As Allah lives, it has a strange effect upon me!" Holding her heart with her hand, she sank down upon a carpet and continued: "Was I mistaken? Was the Evil One only laughing at my faith in dreams?" "My poor child," answered her nurse, "out of my own experience, I told you of your error long ago. . . . But let us return to the garden and walk again; for the sun is setting and the sweetest air of all the day is abroad." So they went out.

Now Diadem had come out of his swoon and was walking slowly in the garden as Dudu had advised him, seemingly absorbed in the beauty of the flowers. At the corner of an alley the lady Donia saw him and cried: "O nurse, do you see that young man? Is he not beautiful? How wonderful are his figure and the way he walks. Tell me, do you know him?" "I do not know him," answered Dudu, "but I should judge from his appearance that he is the son of some king. Ah, ah, my mistress, he is indeed marvellous; marvellous, upon my soul!" "His beauty is perfect!" murmured the princess. "Happy his lover!" ventured Dudu; and at the same time signed to Diadem to leave the garden. The prince understood her and walked straight on towards the gate, while Donia fol-

lowed with her eyes, saying: "Dudu, do you feel at all the strange feeling which I feel? Is it possible that I can be troubled by the sight of a man? O nurse, I know that I am taken and, after all these years, shall need a cast of your office!" "Allah confound the wicked tempter!" said the nurse. "Yes, you are taken in the nets, my mistress, but the pigeon who shall free you is handsome enough." Then said Donia: "Dudu, my good Dudu, you must bring this young man to me. I would not wish him at any other hands than yours, my dearest nurse. Run quickly and look for him; and you shall have a thousand dinars and a robe worth a thousand. If you refuse, I die." "Return to the palace, my child," said the nurse, "and let me go about this thing in my own way. I promise that the charming union shall take place."

She left the princess and went to where Diadem had waited for her; he greeted her joyfully and gave her a thousand dinars when she had told him all that had passed. Hearing of the lady Donia's emotion and what she had said, he eagerly asked when they might come together, and Dudu replied: "Tomorrow without fail." The prince then gave her a robe and other presents worth a thousand dinars in all, which she joyfully accepted, saying: "I will come to fetch you myself tomorrow at whatever hour seems favourable to me."

The old woman hurried off and told her expectant mistress that she had been able to discover the young man and even speak to him. "Tomorrow I will lead him by the hand to you," she said. The princess was overjoyed and gave her nurse a thousand dinars and presents worth a further thousand. That night the three people concerned in this adventure slept a sleep calmed with contentment and hope.

With the first light of morning, the old woman came to Diadem's lodging and there undid a packet containing a woman's clothes. She dressed the prince as a young girl and then wrapped him completely in a great *izar* covering his face with a thick veil. "You must walk as women walk, with little steps and swaying your hips from left to right," she said. "Let me answer any questions that may be addressed to us, and do not speak whatever happens."

The two set out together and came to the gate of the palace, which was guarded by the chief eunuch in person. Seeing a stranger, he said to the old woman: "Who is this unknown person? Bring her here and I will examine her: the rules are strict and I have every right to feel and even to undress anyone I do not know. Let me feel her with my hand and see her with my eyes."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD WOMAN cried out: "What are you saying? Do you not know that our mistress Donia has herself sent for this excellent needlewoman? Do you not know that she is an expert in the art of designing upon silk?" Nevertheless the eunuch scowled, saying: "I know nothing of designs on silk. I must feel this stranger and examine her all over."

The old nurse seemed to fly into a great passion at these words; she stood stoutly before the eunuch.

saying: "To think that I ever took you for a model of politeness! What has happened to you all of a sudden? Do you want me to get you dismissed from the palace?" Then, turning to Diadem, she continued: "Excuse our chief eunuch, my child; he is only joking. Pass without fear."

Diadem went through the door, moving his hips and sending through his veil a smile which turned the chief eunuch to desirous stone. The old woman led him through a corridor, through a gallery, then through other corridors and other galleries, until they came, at the end of the seventh gallery, to a hall, which gave upon a large court by six curtained doors. "Count the doors one after the other and enter by the seventh," said the old woman. "There you will find something surpassing all the treasures of the earth; the virgin flower, the sweet young body which is called Donia."

Diadem counted the doors and entered by the seventh; he let the curtain fall behind him and lowered the veil which hid his face. The lady Donia was sleeping upon the diwan, dressed only in the transparent jasmin of her flesh. Silent calls for unguessed kisses emanated from the whole length of her. In one movement Diadem slipped off his clothes and leaping, lithe as a deer, upon the couch, took the sleeping princess in his arms. Her startled cry was smothered by his lips. Thus came together for the first time the fair Prince Diadem and the lovely lady Donia in a confusion of thighs and trembling limbs. For a whole month they did not leave their burning kisses or that laughter which is the gift of Him who has made all things beautiful.

The wazir and Aziz waited all that night for the return of Diadem; and when he did not come they

began to be seriously disquieted. Morning brought no news of their friend, so that they gave him up for lost and were thrown into a turmoil of perplexity and grief. Said Aziz in a tearful voice: "The palace gates will never again open for our master; what must we do now?" "We must stay here," said the wazir; so they stayed a whole month, filling the place of food and sleep with lamentation. When the month was over without a sign of Diadem, the wazir said: "My child, we are in a very sad and difficult position. I think that our best plan will be to return to our own country and tell the king of this misfortune. If we do not do so, he may blame us for keeping him in ignorance." Without further delay they made their preparations and left for Green City.

As soon as they arrived, they hastened to the palace of King Sulayman Shah, and told him of the lamentable ending to their adventure. Then they stood before him, sobbing silently.

The king felt the earth cracking beneath his feet; he gave a loud cry and fell unconscious to the floor. But of what use are swoons and tears and lamentations? The king controlled the grief which fed upon his marrow and blackened his soul; and swore to take a vengeance for his son, Diadem, such as had not been seen upon the earth before. He called to him, by public crier, each man in his kingdom who could hold lance or sword; he brought forth his engines of war, his tents, and his elephants; and, followed by the mighty army of those who loved him for his generosity and justice, set out for the Isles of Camphor and Crystal.

Meanwhile Donia's apartment in the palace was lighted by the happiness of the two lovers; for six months they only rose from the carpets of the couch

to eat and drink and sing. One day when love had ravished his soul beyond the ordinary, Diadem said to Donia: "Saviour of my heart, there is one thing lacking to the perfection of our love." "Light of my eyes, what further thing could you wish? she asked in astonishment. "Are not my lips and my breasts and my thighs all yours; my arms which hold you and my soul which adores you? Are there yet some practices of love which I do not know? Tell me, then, and you will see that I can do them well enough." "My lamb," replied Diadem, "it has nothing to do with the manner of our loving. Let me tell you who I am. Dear princess, I am myself a king's son and not a merchant. My father's name is Sulayman Shah, monarch of Green City and the Mountains of Ispahan. It was he who sent his wazir not long ago to ask your hand in marriage for me. Do you remember that you refused and menaced the chief eunuch with a mace? Now that what you decided against has come to pass, let us both journey to green Ispahan together."

Donia threw her arms gladly about her lover's neck, giving many signs of her readiness to go with him. For ten months the white of morning had surprised them at their kisses, but that night they slept.

They were still sleeping when the sun was high and the rest of the palace awake. King Shahraman seated among the cushions of his throne, surrounded by the emirs and notables of his kingdom, was receiving the homage of the corporation of jewellers. The chief jeweller offered the king a wonderful box holding more than a hundred thousand dinars' worth of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. The king was satisfied with the gift and called his chief eunuch, saying: "O Kafur, take this box to your mistress, Donia, and return to tell us if the gift pleases her. So Kafur

made his way to the private pavilion of the princess.

He found the nurse Dudu stretched on a carpet before the door of her mistress's room while the entrances of the pavilion were shut and the curtains lowered. He thought to himself: "How is it they sleep so late; for it is not their custom?" Not wishing to return to the king without an answer, he stepped over the body of the old woman and, pushing open the door, entered the apartment. His eyes started from his head when he saw the lady Donia lying naked in the arms of a young man; and both bodies showing urgent signs of more than ordinary fornication.

Kafur remembered his rough treatment at the hands of Donia, and said in his eunuch's soul: "Is this how she hates men? I think that my time has come for vengeance." He left the place softly, closing the door behind him, and returned to King Shahraman, who asked him what his mistress had said. "Here is the box," answered the eunuch; and the astonished king asked: "Does not my daughter care any more for jewels than for husbands?" "My lord, excuse me from answering before all these people," answered the eunuch; so the king emptied his throne-room of all save his wazir, and commanded the eunuch to explain. Said Kafur: "I found my lady in such and such a position; but of a truth the young man is very beautiful." The king beat his hands together and opened wide his eyes, crying: "The thing is incredible! You say you saw them, Kafur?" "With this eye and with this eye," answered the eunuch. "It is altogether monstrous!" cried the king; and bade the negro bring the guilty pair into his presence.

When the two lovers stood before him, he cried:

"Is it true!" in a suffocated voice, and, seizing his great sword in silent rage, would have thrown himself upon Diadem; but Donia protected the prince with her arms and pressing her lips to his, cried to her father: "Kill both of us!" The king therefore returned to his throne and ordered the eunuch to take the princess back to her own palace. When this had been done, he questioned Diadem in these words: "Corrupt miscreant, who are you? Who is your father? How did you reach my daughter's palace?" "O king," returned Diadem, "if you desire my death, I warn you that your own will follow soon after and your kingdom will be utterly destroyed." "How is that?" cried Shahraman beside himself with rage; and the other answered: "I am the son of King Sulayman Shah; I have taken what was refused to me, as it was written that I should. Take thought, therefore, O king, before you harm me."

The king was perplexed when he heard this and did not know how to act, so he consulted his wazir, who said: "Do not believe the lies of this impostor. Death is the only punishment for such a son of a bitch. Allah curse him!" Therefore the king said to his executioner: "Cut off this man's head!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT WOULD HAVE been all over with Diadem if, at that very moment, two envoys had not been an-

nounced from King Sulayman Shah. These were none other than Aziz and the wazir, who had come ahead of the king and his army. When they recognised their prince, they well-nigh fainted for joy and threw themselves at his feet. Diadem made them rise and kissed them, telling them in a few words the danger in which he stood. They told him of the coming of the army, with its full force and Sulayman Shah at its head; and announced the same to King Shahraman.

King Shahraman understood the danger which he had run in nearly causing the death of young Diadem; so he lifted his arms and thanked Allah for having stayed the hand of the executioner. Then to Diadem, he said: "My son, excuse an old man, who does not always know how to act. It was all the fault of this ill-omened wazir. I will have him impaled at once." Diadem kissed his hand, saying: "You are a second father to me, O king; therefore I beg you to pardon me the emotion which I caused you." "It is all the fault of this miserable eunuch," said the king, "I will have him crucified at once on a rotten plank not worth two dirhams." "I think you are right about the eunuch," said Diadem, "but I pray you pardon the wazir till his next offence." Following Diadem's lead, Aziz and the wazir of Sulayman Shah interceded and obtained pardon for the eunuch Kafur, who stood pissing his garments with terror. Then said Diadem; "The first thing that we have to do is to allay the fear of your daughter, who is my whole soul to me." "I will go to her myself," said the king. First he ordered his emirs, his wazirs and his chamberlains to escort Prince Diadem to the hammam and to bathe with him; then he ran to Donia's pavilion, where he found his daughter about to fall upon a sword, whose hilt

she had rested on the ground. "He is safe!" cried the king. "Have pity on your poor old father, my child." Hearing this, Donia threw the sword far from her and kissed her father's hands while he told her what had happened. Then she said: "I will not be at ease until I have seen my dear love." By this time Diadem had returned from the bath, so the king hastened to bring him to Donia, who threw herself upon his neck. While they were kissing, the king discreetly shut the door upon them and returned to his palace to give the necessary orders for the reception of King Sulayman Shah. He sent Aziz and the wazir in haste to tell the happy tidings to the advancing king and, at the same time, took care to despatch this present: a hundred each of splendid horses, racing dromedaries, boys, young girls, negroes, and negresses.

Then King Shahraman himself went out to meet Sulayman Shah, taking Prince Diadem with him. When the monarch of Green City saw them approaching with a vast retinue, he cried: "Glory be to Allah, who has brought my son to his desire!" The two kings embraced and then Diadem threw himself upon his father's neck, weeping for joy. All sat down to eat and drink and talk in the most perfect accord; then the kadis and their witnesses were sent for and a marriage contract was written upon the spot for Diadem and the lady Donia. Money presents were given to the soldiers and the people; and for forty days and nights the city was decorated and lighted with coloured lights. Amid the joy and the feasting, Diadem and Donia could at last openly indulge their love to the height of their imaginations.

Diadem did not forget the good services of his friend Aziz. He sent him with a convoy to fetch his

mother, who had long been mourning for him, and then to return. After the death of Sulayman Shah, when the prince had himself become king of Green City and the Mountains of Ispahan, he made Aziz his grand wazir; the old gardener, intendant general of the kingdom; and the chief merchant, supreme general of all the corporations. All concerned in this tale lived in great happiness until death took them; for death is the one ill for which there is no antidote.

When the wazir Dandan had finished this tale of Aziz and Aziza, of Diadem and Donia, he asked Al-Makan's leave to drink a glass of syrup of roses. "O wazir," cried the king, "there is no one on earth as worthy as you are to hold company with kings and princes! Your tale has been delightfully told and has pleased me very much." With that he gave Dandan the most beautiful robe of honour which he had at hand.

The siege of Constantinople. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE SIEGE OF Constantinople had already dragged on for four years without a decisive result; the soldiers and their officers were suffering very greatly from their exile; and rebellion seemed imminent.

King Al-Makan acted with decision; he called the three chiefs: Bahraman, Rustem, and Turkash, and said to them in the presence of Dandan: "You have yourselves seen how we are situated; the fatigue which weighs on us all because of this unfortunate siege, and the terrible scourges which old Mother-of-Calamity has inflicted upon us, beginning with the death of my brother Sharkan. Take time to consider and then tell me what ought to be done." The three bowed their heads and thought for a long time before they said: "O king, the wazir Dandan has more experience than us all; he has grown old in wisdom." So Al-Makan turned towards Dandan and said: "We wait upon your words."

Dandan advanced before the king, saying:

"Monarch of all time, nothing but harm can come from our continuing beneath the walls of Constantinople. You are yourself desirous of seeing your young son Kanmakan, and your niece Power-of-Destiny who is with the women in the palace at Damascus; and all of us are grieving for our country and our own houses. My advice is, that we return to Baghdad and come back on some future occasion to raze this wicked city to the ground and leave it for the crows and vultures." "You have answered as I would have answered myself," said the king and, with that, he had public criers announce throughout the camp that the army would return home in three days.

On the third day the whole force left their camping ground, with trumpets sounding and flags waving, and took the backward road towards Baghdad. After many days and nights they reached the City of Peace and were welcomed with transports of joy by the inhabitants.

The first thing which King Al-Makan did was to visit and kiss Kanmakan who was now seven years of age, and his second thought was to send for his old friend the fireman of the hammam. When he saw him he left his throne and embraced him, causing him to sit by his side, and making much of him before his emirs and all the court. After this long time the fireman was hard to recognise; for, by eating, drinking, and living in happy repose, he had become as fat as it is possible to be: his neck was like the neck of an elephant, his belly like the belly of a whale, and his face shone like a round loaf as it comes from the oven.

At first he objected to sitting by the king, saying: "My master, may Allah preserve me from such a liberty! The days have long since passed when it was permissible for me to sit down in your presence." "Those days have begun again, my father, my saviour," said the king; and pulled the fireman down upon the great bed of the throne.

Then said Al-Makan: "I wish you to ask some favour of me, for I am ready to grant it, even unto the half of my kingdom. Speak and Allah will hear you." "There is something which I would like to ask for, but I fear it would be indiscreet," answered the old fireman. The king became sorrowful, and said: "I command you to speak." So the fireman ventured: "Since I must, I wish very much that you would give me a patent making me general president of all the firemen in all the hammams of Jerusalem." At these words the king and the court laughed immoderately; so that the poor fireman thought that he had asked too much and became very sad. "As Allah lives, ask me something else!" cried the king; and the wazir Dandan also quietly approached the fire-

man, pinching his leg and winking at him as much as to say: "Ask something else!" Then said the fireman: "O king of time, I am very anxious to be named sheikh of the corporation of scavengers in Jerusalem." This time the king and all who were with him laughed till their legs flew up in the air. At last the king said: "Come, my brother, I want you to ask me something which is worth while, something on a level with your deserts." "But I am afraid you could not grant it," murmured the fireman; and the king exclaimed: "Nothing is impossible to Allah!" "Well, then," cried the fireman, astonished at his own daring: "make me sultan of Damascus, in the place of Prince Sharkan." "Be it so," answered the king, and straightway wrote out the patent of the fireman, giving him in his new position the name of Zibl Khan Al-Mujahid. He bade the wazir Dandan accompany the new king to Damascus with a magnificent following; and then to return, bringing with him Power-of-Destiny, his dead brother's little daughter. He took leave of the fireman with a kiss, recommending him to deal justly by his new subjects; then to all who were present he said: "Let those who would win my regard express their love for Sultan Zibl Khan by means of gifts." Presents were showered upon the new king and Al-Makan himself dressed him in the royal robe; decreeing for him, as a special guard by the way, five thousand young mamelukes, and a multitude of porters to carry the red and gold palanquin of his kingship. Thus did the fireman become Sultan Al-Mujahid Zibl Khan; and journey to Damascus with the wazir Dandan and the emirs Rustem, Turkash, and Bahraman.

The first care of the new sultan was to arrange a splendid company to take the eight year old princess

to Baghdad. He gave her ten young girls and ten negro lads for her own service, and heaped gifts upon her. These gifts consisted primarily of pure rose essence and apricot conserve sealed in great boxes against the damp; but there were also delicious interlaced pastries, so fragile that they were hardly likely to reach Baghdad in safety; twenty huge pots filled with crystallised dates in a syrup of cloves; and twenty chests of chosen sweetmeats ordered especially from the most cunning artists in Damascus. These things were loaded upon forty camels; with large bales of silks and golden fabrics with precious weapons and copper vessels damascened with gold.

The sultan Zibl Khan also wanted to make a great present of silver to the Wazir Dandan, but the latter would not accept it, saying: "O king, you are but newly set upon your throne and have better need of your money." The caravan set out and came in a month by easy stages to Baghdad.

Al-Makan received young Power-of-Destiny with every manifestation of joy and gave her into the care of her delighted mother, Nuzhat, and of the grand-chamberlain. He appointed the same teachers for her as for Kanmakan, so that the two children became inseparable and loved with a love which increased as they grew older. Thus eight years passed away while King Al-Makan busied himself about the armaments which should resume the war against the perfidious Christians.

But because of the fatigues and privations of his lost youth, King Al-Makan daily diminished in strength and well being. As his condition became worse, he called his wazir Dandan, saying: "O wazir, I have a project which I wish to realise. Tell me strictly what you think of it. I have resolved to abdi-

cate during my lifetime and to set my son, Kanmakan on the throne in my stead, so that I may rejoice to see his glorious reign before I die. Tell me what you think of this, O wazir whose soul is steeped in wisdom?"

The wazir Dandan kissed the earth between the king's hand, saying in a voice which quivered from emotion: "Auspicious king, prudent and equitable sultan, your project is neither profitable nor possible. For one thing, Prince Kanmakan is much too young; and for another, it is certain that he who names his son to reign in his stead while he is yet alive, numbers his own days." "As for my life," replied the king, "I feel that that is over. As for the youth of my son, I will make the grand-chamberlain, who is the husband of my sister Nuzhat, tutor to Kanmakan as he reigns."

The king called his emirs and wazirs and all the great ones of his kingdom and, in their presence, nominated the grand-chamberlain as official adviser to his son, Kanmakan, commanding him strictly to marry the young prince with Power-of-Destiny when they should reach a suitable age. "I am overcome with honours and lost in the greatness of your generosity," said the grand-chamberlain. Then Al-Makan turned towards his son, weeping and saying: "Dear child, when I am dead, the grand-chamberlain will be your guide and counsel; but the wazir Dandan will be your father in my place. I feel that I am about to journey from this unsubstantial world to a home which shall not pass away. Before I go I wish to hand on to you the one desire which yet remains in me, to take vengeance for the death of your grandfather, Omar Al-Neman and for your uncle, Sharkan, upon that evil and terrible old woman who is called

Mother-of-Calamity." "Let your heart be at peace on that score, my father," replied young Kanmakan, "Allah will avenge you all through my right arm." Thereupon King Al-Makan felt a great peace descend upon his soul and he stretched himself contentedly upon that couch from which he was not to arise.

Not long afterwards King Al-Makan became, as every creature must, dust within the Hand which created him: and it was as if he had never been. For time reaps all and does not remember.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

TIME REAPS ALL and does not remember: therefore let him who would know the fate which will befall his name in time to come, guard the fame of those who have passed before him into the room of death.

That is the tale of King Al-Makan, son of King Omar Al-Neman, and brother of Prince Sharkan—may Allah keep the three of them in His infinite mercy!

But to prove that the proverb does not lie, which says: "He who leaves children behind him, does not die," I will begin:

THE ADVENTURES OF YOUNG KANMAKAN, SON OF AL-MAKAN

YOUNG KANMAKAN and his cousin Power-of-Destiny, ya Allah! how beautiful they became! They

grew in a harmony of fairness and early blossomed to perfection; so that they might be compared only to two boughs bearing remarkable fruit on one tree, or two moons shining in the same empty space. Power-of-Destiny had in her own person all that may make people mad; beyond the reach of curious eyes in her royal solitude, her colouring had reached an excellent whiteness, her waist had become as slim as the letter *alif*, and her hips worthy of worship for their great heaviness. The water of her mouth; O milk! O wines! O sugar! where are you all? I can say nothing of her lips, which were pomegranate-coloured; but ripe fruit might tell you of them. Sad roses might inform you wistfully of her cheeks. A poet truly said of her:

*Get drunk my heart, go mad, my eyes,
For she was made in paradise,
And is too good for paradise.*

*No costly paint of kohl has shown
Lids of so languishing a brown,
The brownest eyelids ever known,
So often seen, but never known.*

*The mild ripe grapes before they're pressed,
Weep tears of sunny wine to rest
On their red skins, but it were best
To taste the wine her lips expressed
When "But I love you" they expressed.*

*The palm-trees we discover where
Life is a dust and the sand bare,
Making a lonely shadow there,*

*Tall palm-trees loosing to the air
Their dark green fans: such is her hair,
The dim leaf shadows of her hair.*

Such was the young princess Power-of-Destiny, daughter of Nuzhat; with Kanmakan it was different. Hunting and riding, tilting with the lance and javelin, shooting with the bow, and racing on horseback, had suppld his body and fortified his spirit, until he had become the most accomplished cavalier to be found among the faithful and the bravest soldiers of his time. Yet the colouring of his face remained like that of a little girl and his cheeks were more beautiful to see than roses or narcissus. A poet said of him:

*My love was hardly circumcised
When little downy hairs surprised
(Eh, but I'm drunk) his cheeks.*

*The smiles upon his countenance
Are little fawns at lonely dance
(Eh, but I'm drunk) in Spring.*

*The wine that flows below his skin
Is a publican to call us in
(Eh, but I'm drunk) to sing.*

*Of all the charms below, above,
Those small green silken moulds I love
(Eh, but I'm drunk) his breeks.*

You must know that the grand-chamberlain had already completely usurped the kingly power, in spite of the remonstrances of his wife and of all the benefits which he had received from Al-Makan: and had even

had himself proclaimed sultan by a section of the people and the army. There was, however, another party who remained faithful to the lineage of Omar Al-Neman, counselled to this duty by the old wazir, Dandan. Dandan himself had been obliged to leave Baghdad owing to the threats of the chamberlain, and to establish himself in a neighbouring city, where he waited with assurance the time when Destiny should fight on the side of the orphan king.

The chamberlain, who had no one left to fear, had forced Kanmakan and his mother to keep their apartments, and had forbidden his daughter to have anything to do with the young king. Mother and son lived in retreat, waiting until it should please Allah to restore them to their rights.

But in spite of the usurper's watchfulness, Kanmakan was sometimes able to see his little cousin and to speak with her in secret. One day, when he could not see her and his heart was more wrung than usual by its love, he took a sheet of paper and wrote these verses to his friend:

*You walk in the garth and piqued roses adore you,
Dropping their dry and coloured leaves before you;
The silver lilies close their eyelids, while
The scented camomile
And other red flowers dare not smile.
When, fairest, when
Shall the two dusty violets of my mouth
Attain their cyclamen
And slake their drouth?
The lavender has said: "Be apposite,
O moon of white.
But for one night,
But for one night!"*

He sealed this letter and gave it to the eunuch on duty, who immediately carried it to the chamberlain. The latter foamed with rage when he read the declaration of this love, and swore that he would chastise the author of it. Presently, however, he thought better of his intention and determined to speak to his wife, so that the affair should not be noised abroad. He found Nuzhat in her apartment and said to her. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE FOUND NUZHAT in her apartment and said to her, after he had sent little Power-of-Destiny into the garden to take the air: "Young Kanmakan reached the age of puberty some time ago; now he seeks to try his manhood upon our daughter. It is necessary therefore, that they should be separated beyond any chance of meeting, for it is dangerous to bring wood and fire together. Your daughter must never leave the women's apartments and never uncover her face; for she has reached an age when both these things may well be demanded of her. I charge you to prevent the two from holding any communication; for on the least excuse I will prevent that young man from ever having recourse to his instincts."

Nuzhat wept and, as soon as her husband left her, called her nephew Kanmakan, and informed him of the chamberlain's anger. "Yet you must know, dear

child," she added, "that I will sometimes be able to manage secret meetings for you, if you will be content to speak through the door. Therefore be patient until Allah has pity upon us." But Kanmakan felt his soul thrown into confusion by what he heard. "I will not live for a moment longer in a place where my word ought to be the sole law!" he cried. "The stones of this palace shall never again cast their shadows on my humiliation."

Without an hour's delay he undressed, covered his head with a kalendar's bonnet, threw an old travelling cloak about his shoulders, and made his way to the gates of the city; taking with him only a single loaf which was three days old. He was the first to go out through the gates when they were opened; he walked with great strides, reciting these stanzas as a farewell to all he left behind him:

*I feared my heart,
I do not fear it longer.
Now let it ache
Or break
Apart,
My soul is stronger.*

*Heart fed on love
And softened in the feeding,
Rides, for heart's dead,
My head
Above
Feeling and pleading*

*If I'd remorse
To see heart when it languished
Or dying lust,*

*I must
Perforce
Have fallen vanquished.*

*I'll range the whole
Good earth until its ending
And the free wave
To save
My soul
Young and unbending*

*Warring with men
Their valour shall renew me.
Walls of my home,
I'll come
Again:
You'll bow down to me.*

*He who would claim
A great beast's horns or so on,
Must either smite,
In fight
Or tame
The beast they grow on.*

While Kanmakan thus fled from the city of his fathers, his mother vainly sought him everywhere. Then she sat down to weep and anxiously awaited his return. The second, the third, and the fourth day passed without tidings of him; so she shut herself in her own apartments, wailing and saying: "Where is my child? In what land may I look for him? Of what avail are those poor tears, my boy? Where are you, Kanmakan? Oh, where are you?" The poor woman would neither eat or drink and her grief soon became

known throughout the whole city, where it was shared by the inhabitants, who loved the boy as they had loved his father. All cried: "Where are you, O Al-Makan, O just king? Your son is lost and none of these of whom you so loved can find him. Woe, woe, there are none left of the race of Omar Al-Neman!"

Kanmakan walked all of the first day, and only stopped to rest in the darkness of the night. For many days he went on, living upon the herbs which he gathered and drinking from rivers and streams; until, on the fourth day, he came to a valley filled with trees through which a sparkling river flowed. He halted amid the singing of birds and crooning of ring-doves, made his ablution and his prayer, and lay down under a great tree to sleep. At midnight he woke to hear a voice ringing through the silence of the valley, from some rocks which lay at the side of it. The voice was singing:

*To lighten my darkness,
I look for the red crescent of her lips
And if that comes not
I look for the blue crescent
Of the sword of death.*

*Oh, joy of friends gathered upon the cool meadow
To drink wine handed by white hands!*

*Flowers of Spring on the meadow
Between spread slim fingers!*

*You sit drinking the tulip-coloured wine
In the midst of this green earth
With all her waters.*

As this pleasing song mounted through the night air, Kanmakan rose and tried to pierce the shadow in the direction from which the voice came; but he could see nothing save the dim trunks of the trees which overhung the river. He walked a little towards the sound, coming down to the banks of the water. The voice then became more distant, singing this poem through the night:

*I left her with my tribe,
For love lines link us.
(Rich Tahim is my tribe
And people think us
Supreme in horses and in dark-eyed love.)*

*I left her with my tribe,
For vows have bound us:
The dark tents of my tribe
Where dawn has found us
Still thinking that the night stars shone above.*

*Oh, breeze blow from my tribe
And cool my heart-ache,
O Saad of my tribe,
Say does she partake—
She with the horse which has the copper bells,
She, scorpion of my tribe—
The bitten heart-string?
Physicians of my tribe,
Oh, for my smarts bring
The water of her lips and nothing else.*

When Kanmakan heard this second song he tried to see the singer in the darkness. As he could not succeed, he climbed a rock and cried at the top of his voice. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE CRIED AT the top of his voice: "O you who pass in the darkness of the night, I pray you approach that I may hear your story, which seems to be like mine. Thus will the time pass pleasantly."

In a few moments the voice which had sung, answered: "Who is that calling? Mortal or Jinni from below the earth? If you are a Jinni, continue on your way; but if you are a man, wait here till the coming of dawn; for the night is full of pitfalls and treachery."

"It seems to me," thought Kanmakan, "that the owner of this voice has led a life strangely like mine," and he stayed where he was until morning.

With the first light he saw a man dressed as a desert Bedouin, wearing a sword and carrying a shield over his mighty shoulder, come towards him through the trees. The two greeted each other and the stranger said in astonishment: "Who are you, unknown young man? What tribe do you belong to? Who are your parents? You are not of an age to wander at night in places unpatrolled by soldiers. Tell me your story." "My grandfather was King Omar Al-Neman," answered the youth, "my father was King Al-Makan; and I myself am that Kanmakan who burns for love of his cousin Power-of-Destiny." Then said the Bedouin: "If you are a king's son, how is it that you

are dressed as a kalendar, and journey without a worthy bodyguard?" "I will make my own bodyguard in time," answered Kanmakan. "If you wish, you can be the first member of it." The Bedouin laughed, saying: "My child, you speak as if you were already a warrior, or a hero accomplished in twenty fights. To show that you are far otherwise, I shall take you as my slave. Then if your parents are royal, they will pay me a good ransom." Rage beamed from Kanmakan's eyes as he answered: "As Allah lives, I will pay my own ransom. Look out for yourself, O Bedouin! When I heard your verses I thought that you were a man of fair manners. . . ."

With that Kanmakan hurled himself upon the other, who received him smiling, expecting but child's play. He was wrong; Kanmakan set his feet solidly to the earth, as firm as if they had been mountains, as valiant as if they had been towers; then, when he was well fixed, he clasped the Bedouin in such a grip that his bones seemed like to break and his bowels to gush from him. Suddenly the boy lifted him in his arms and ran towards the river. The Bedouin, who was still amazed at finding such strength in a child cried: "What are you doing?" "I am going to throw you into this river," said Kanmakan. "It will carry you to the Tigris, the Tigris will carry you to the Nahr-Issa, the Nahr-Issa will carry you to the Euphrates, and the Euphrates will carry you to your own country, where your tribe may judge of its hero's valiance." As the Bedouin hung high in the air over the water, he cried: "I conjure you to spare my life in the name of your mistress, Power-of-Destiny. I will be the most submissive of your slaves." At once Kanmakan set him gently on the ground, saying: "You have disarmed me."

They sat down together on the river's bank, and the Bedouin gave Kanmakan barley-bread and salt so that their friendship was established for ever. "Tell me, good companion," asked Kanmakan, "who you are; for you know who I am." The Bedouin answered:

"I am Sabbah bin Rammah bin Humam of the tribe of Taim in the desert of Sham. This, in a few words, is my story:

"I was very young when my father died; so my uncle brought me up in his house with his daughter Najmah. We loved each other; and, when I was of marriageable age, I asked for her hand; but her father would not consent as I was poor. In spite of the remonstrances made him by the chiefs of our tribe, he swore that I might not marry her until I could give a dowry of fifty horses, fifty blood camels, ten women slaves, fifty measures of corn, and fifty measures of barley. Therefore I left my tribe for the purpose of attacking caravans and pillaging merchants, which seemed to me my only means of collecting this dowry. That is the reason of my lying and singing in this place last night. But, O my friend, what are my songs compared with the beauty of Najmah! To see her once is to have the soul filled with benediction for the rest of one's life."

"I thought that your story would be like mine," said Kanmakan; "Let us henceforth fight side by side and win our mistresses with our swords." As he was speaking a cloud of dust rose in the distance and came rapidly towards them; a horseman rode up, whose face was as yellow as death and his garments, stained with blood. "A little water for my wound, Believers!" he cried. "Hold me up, for I am about to die! If you help me, my horse shall belong to you." The Bedouin,

who understood horses very well, looked at the animal which the wounded stranger rode and found it to be unequalled among all the steeds of the desert, perfect in a beauty which would confound the heart of any Arab. "Indeed," he exclaimed, "it is such a horse as one sees no more in these days!" Kanmakan took the rider gently in his arms and laid him on the grass, saying: "Who are you, my brother, and what is the nature of your wound?" The rider opened his garments and showed that his back was one great hole from which waves of blood were pouring. The young king washed these wounds as best he might, and gently dressed them with fresh herbs. Then he gave the dying man water to drink, saying: "Who has put you into this grievous state, my brother?" The man answered:

"Good helper of mine, the beauty of this mare has killed me. She belonged to King Aphridonios of Constantinople; and her fame had gone forth throughout all the deserts. She was not the sort of animal which ought to stay in the stables of an unbelieving king; I was selected by my tribe to deliver her out of the hands of the soldiers who guarded her day and night. I came to the tent where she was lodged and scraped acquaintance with the guards; wishing for my advice they asked me to try the animal, so I took advantage of this to lash her with my whip and gallop away. They pursued me on their horses with a cloud of arrows and javelins many of which came to rest in my back; but the mare carried me away from them more quickly than a falling star and has borne me for three days without a stop. Now my blood is spent, and I feel death weighing upon my eyelids.

"You have helped me; so that, at my death, the mare belongs to you. Her name is Al-Katul Al-

Majnun; and she is the leader of all her people.

"But before you take possession of her, O youth with the poor clothes and noble countenance, I pray you carry me behind you to my own tribe that I may die in the tents where I was born."

"Brother of the desert," answered Kanmakan, "I also belong to a worthy house; therefore I am ready to do as you wish, whatever happens to the mare." With that he began to lift the Arab; but the poor man gave a great sigh, saying: "Wait a little, for perhaps my death is closer than I thought. I would bear witness to the Faith." He half shut his eyes and stretched out his hand with its palm to the sky, saying:

"I witness that there is no God but Allah. I witness that Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah."

Then, being prepared to meet his death, he sang this song:

*I have galloped the world bloodily on my black mare,
My Katul, my mare,
Spreading terror and carnage ev'rywhere,
Breaking down mountains to plant despair,
Drying up rivers to leave blood there,
Stealing all gold, debauching all fair;
And I die as I lived in the open air.
Passing, beside this river here,
I have one regret and but this fear
That you, young stranger I make my heir,
Will not be worthy of my black mare,
My Katul, my mare.*

With that the Arab convulsively opened his mouth and gave the death rattle; then his eyes closed for ever.

Kanmakan and his companion buried the dead man

with suitable prayer and set off together to find their destiny upon the road of Allah.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KANMAKAN RODE HIS new steed and Sabbah walked faithfully behind, for he had sworn eternal fealty upon the Holy Temple, the house of Allah.

Then began a life full of adventure, of conflicts with wild animals and brigands, of hunting and travelling, of nights passed in hiding from savage beasts and days of fighting and collecting booty. At the peril of their heads, they amassed great herds with their keepers, horses with their grooms, and tents with their furnishings. Kanmakan gave Sabbah charge of all they took and spent his own time in fighting for more. Whenever they sat down to rest, they spoke of Power-of-Destiny and of Najmah, consoling each other and exchanging hopes. Two years passed in this way.

Here is one of a thousand of Kanmakan's exploits:

One day Kanmakan was riding in search of adventure preceded by his faithful Sabbah. The latter walked with his naked sword in his hand, uttering terrible cries from time to time, opening his eyes like caves, and crying to the solitude of the desert: "Make way there, make way!" They had just eaten a spitted gazelle and drunken from a little spring, when they saw, at the bottom of the hill on which they sat, a

pasture covered with camels, sheep, cattle, and horses. A band of armed slaves sat under an awning and guarded the animals. "Stay here," said Kanmakan to Sabbah, "I will capture all these animals and slaves myself."

He galloped his horse down the hill, like the sudden thunder of a breaking cloud, and threw himself upon the slaves, shouting this warlike hymn:

*We are the blood of Omar Al-Neman,
We are the heroes big with fate.
We are the driving head of the sword
And the shield of those who call us lord.
See, our enemies bow to us,
Scarfed in red they bow to us,
Bow and bow on the lance point—thus!
We are the heroes big with fate,
We are the blood of Omar Al-Neman.*

The terrified slaves began calling for help, thinking that all the Arabs of the desert had suddenly come upon them; at their calling three warriors ran from the tent and, leaping on to their horses, rode towards Kanmakan, crying: "Here is the man who stole the mare Katul! We have him at last! Down with him!" The young king whispered in Katul's ear so that she bounded forward like an ogre upon his prey. Kanmakan's lance jested with the enemy; it passed through the belly of the foremost and came out at his back with a kidney on the end. The next two thrusts sought out two more kidneys and the three warriors were dead. The victor turned towards the slaves, but they threw themselves face downwards on the ground, begging for mercy. Then said Kanmakan: "Drive these beasts before me to such and such a place, where

my people are." So, with the new booty, he rejoined Sabbah, who had not stirred during the fight.

As they went forward they saw a cloud of dust raised by a hundred cavaliers armed in the fashion of Constantinople. "Look after our prizes," said Kanmakan to Sabbah, "and I will deal with the Unbelievers." The Arab drove their flocks and slaves behind a near-by hill, while Kanmakan went forward to meet the horsemen, who soon surrounded him on all sides. Their chief addressed him thus: "Sweet girl, who rides a horse so charmingly, O tender eyes and flowering cheeks, draw near that I may kiss you and make you queen of all."

Kanmakan cried out in his shame: "Dog, son of a dog, what is that you say? If my cheeks are hairless my arm is strong enough to teach manners to a lustful Christian who does not know the difference between a warrior and a girl!" The leader of the hundred drew near and saw that he had indeed to deal with a warrior whom it would be difficult to tame, however rose and white his cheeks might be.

So he cried out: "Where are you going, you insolent boy? Yield yourself, or you are dead!" He ordered one of his men to bind the youth; but hardly had the horseman come near when Kanmakan with one stroke of his sword divided turban, head, body, saddle, and horse into as many halves. A second, a third, and a fourth, threw themselves upon him and met the same fate.

The leader then ordered his men to retire and came near to Kanmakan, saying: "You are a true warrior, delightful youth. I am Kahrdash, known for my bravery through all the lands of Roum; and I spare your life because of your beauty. Go your way in peace. "Whether or not you are Kahrdash is of little

interest to me," answered Kanmakan, "the thing which concerns me is that you should feel the point of my lance; for if you are Kahrdash, I am Kanmakan, son of Al-Makan, son of Omar Al-Neman." Then said the Christian: "Son of Al-Makan, I have fought against your father in many battles. You join his bravery to a beauty such as I have never seen. Therefore retire with all your booty; for it is my will." "It is not my custom to turn aside for any man; therefore on guard, O Christian!" cried the young man as he whispered to his horse. Katul understood the desire of her master and leapt forward with lowered ears and tail held high. The two warriors met like fighting rams or goring bulls. A few terrible passes were exchanged and then Kahrdash swung his lance with all his force against Kanmakan's breast. The youth saved himself by swerving Katul aside and ran the Christian through the belly so that hissing fire came out from his back. Thus Kahrdash ceased to be numbered among the hosts of the Unbelievers.

Seeing their leader fall, his knights fled as fast as their horses would carry them and disappeared in a mist of dust.

Kanmakan wiped the point of his lance upon the bodies which lay before him and, signing to Sabbah, continued upon his way.

It was about this time that the young man met the famous wandering negress of the desert, of whom he had heard much. She wandered from tribe to tribe, telling delicious tales in the tents and below the stars; and passed her life in this profession. Kanmakan begged her to rest herself in his tent and to tell him some story which should pass the time and chase all melancholy thoughts away. The old wanderer sat down by his side on the mat and told him:

THE TALE OF THE HASHISH EATER

THE MOST DELIGHTFUL circumstance which I have yet heard, young lord, is an adventure which happened to a hashish eater.

He was a man who loved above all else the flesh of virgins. . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE WAS A MAN who loved above all the flesh of virgins and occupied himself solely in the satisfaction of this appetite. Now such flesh, when it is carefully chosen, is very expensive and no fortune may suffice to buy enough of it. Therefore this man soon ruined himself by the intemperance of his tastes, for nothing is wrong unless it is carried to excess.

One day, as he wandered in rags and with naked feet in the market begging his bread, a nail entered his foot, so that it bled exceedingly. As the blood continued to flow, even after he had tried to staunch it with a piece of linen, he went to the hammam and sat down in the common hall which, though reserved for the poor, was exceedingly bright and clean.

As he bathed his foot in the central basin, he noticed that a man who sat beside him and had already bathed, was munching something. Seeing this movement of the jaws, the wounded man was very anxious to eat also; so he asked his neighbour what he was chewing.

The other answered in a low voice so that none might hear: "It is hashish. I will give you a little if you like." "I would like it very much," answered the man; so the eater took a piece from his mouth and handed it over, saying: "May it lighten all your griefs." Our hero took the piece and swallowed it whole; then, being unaccustomed to the drug, he burst into strange laughter and filled all the hall with his excessive mirth. A moment afterwards he fell back on the naked marble and became a prey to the following delicious visions:

He thought that he lay naked under the hands of a terrible rubber and two vigorous negroes, who had taken complete possession of his body. He was a plaything in their arms; they turned and moulded him in every way and he felt their muscular fingers digging expertly into his flesh. He groaned beneath the weight of their knees upon his belly as they rubbed him skillfully, and then rejoiced as they bathed him from copper basins and rubbed him with vegetable fibre. At last the master rubber wished to wash certain delicate parts of his person but, as this tickled him, he preferred to do the thing himself. When the bath was over, the rubber covered his body with three towels as white as jasmin, saying: "The time has come, my lord, for you to enter to your bride." "What bride is that? I am a bachelor!" cried the man. "Have you by any chance been eating hashish to make so great a mistake?" "Do not jest with me, my lord," said the rubber, "but follow, for your bride is waiting you eagerly." He threw a great veil of black silk about the man's shoulders and led the way, while the two negroes supported the bridegroom and tickled his bottom from time to time by way of jest, so that he laughed immoderately.

They brought him thus to a half-lighted hall, warmed and scented with incense; where he found a wide dish covered with fruits, pastries, sherberts, and vases of flowers. The three attendants begged him to sit upon an ebony stool and then retired.

Soon a young boy came and stood before him, saying: "O king of time, I am your slave." The man gave a bellow of laughter and, quite disregarding the beauty of the boy, exclaimed: "As Allah lives, I think that every one must have been eating hashish here! They are calling me a king now. . . . Come here, my child, and cut me half of a red and juicy water-melon. That is the fruit I like best. There is nothing like a water-melon." When the boy brought him the thing he desired, cut in admirable slices, he said: "Now begone, for you are not what I want. Run and fetch me my heart's desire; for there is nothing like a virgin to take with water-melon."

The boy departed, and presently returned with a little girl, who advanced, swinging her childish hips. The man snuffled with joy on seeing her; he took her in his arms and, holding her between his thighs, kissed her feverishly. He made her slip beneath him and, taking out his manhood, placed it in her hand. Other things were about to happen when he suddenly became very cold and woke from his dream.

He found himself surrounded by the bathers of the hammam, who were laughing at him with all their hearts and opening their mouths like ovens. They were pointing out to each other his naked zebb, which stood up in the air as far as was humanly possible, as great as that of an ass or an elephant. Some of them poured pitchers of cold water over this column and all were making those jests which are customary when comparing matters in the hammam.

In his confusion the man replaced the towel over his thighs, and said bitterly to those who were laughing at him: "Why did you take away the little girl, just as I was going to put things in their right places?" All the spectators rocked with joy and clapped their hands at this remark, crying: "Are you not ashamed, O hashish eater, still to have such desires, when you have so thoroughly coupled with the air already?"

Kanmakan was convulsed with joyful laughter by this tale; he said to the negress: "Hasten to tell me some more, for your tales are very good." "I have some, young master," she answered, "which will make you forget the one you have just heard, stories so pure and savoury and strange that the deaf rejoice at them."

As the negress was preparing to continue, a man on horseback alighted at the tent door and wished Kanmakan peace, saying: "My lord, I am one of a hundred messengers sent in all directions by the wazir, Dandan, to look for young Prince Kanmakan, who has been absent from Baghdad for three years. The wazir has succeeded in raising all the army and the people against the usurper of the throne of Omar Al-Neman, and has cast him into the lowest dungeon of the city, where he now lies dying of hunger, thirst, and shame. I pray you tell me if you have ever met the prince; for he is called again to sit upon his father's throne."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

· WHEN PRINCE KANMAKAN heard these unexpected tidings, he turned to his faithful Sabbah, and said in a calm voice: "You see that everything comes upon its appointed hour, my friend. Let us rise up now, and go to Baghdad."

The messenger understood from this that he was in the presence of the new king; so he abased himself, while Sabbah and the negress followed his example. "You must come with me to Baghdad and tell me some more stories," said Kanmakan to the negress; while Sabbah exclaimed: "O king, let me run before you to Baghdad that I may announce your coming to the wazir and the people." The young king gave permission; and, at the same time, handed over to the messenger, as a gift for his good news, all the booty which he had taken in the three years which went before. Then he set out for Baghdad on Katul, followed by the negress on one of the camels.

Sabbah journeyed a day ahead of the king and set the whole city of Baghdad in an uproar within a few hours of his arrival there. The people and the army went out, led by the wazir Dandan, and the three chiefs Rustem, Turkash, and Bahraman, to greet the king whom they had never hoped to see again; and, as they went, they called down blessing and honour upon the race of Omar Al-Neman.

When Kanmakan came into sight, swiftly galloping on Katul, thousands of voices of men and women hailed him as king. In spite of his great age, Dandan

jumped nimbly from his horse and ran forward to swear fealty to the descendant of so many monarchs. He led Kanmakan triumphantly into the city, while the negress on her camel told tale after tale to the assembled multitude.

Kanmakan's first action was to embrace Dandan, who had remained faithful; his second was to kiss his mother, who sobbed with joy that she had found him again; and his third was to ask news of Power-of-Destiny. "My child," his mother answered, "I can hardly tell you, for I have occupied myself with nothing but grief since you went away." "Then, dear mother," said Kanmakan, "I beg you to go yourself and bring me word of my cousin and of my aunt, Nuzhat." His mother went to the apartment where the two women were sitting and brought them back into the presence of the king. Then was such a feast of joy as has never been equalled. A thousand songs were sung; and this was one of them.

*Water of smiles running among pearls,
Rose and silver silk of the cheeks of girls,
And the kissing of them!*

*Black hair at dawn falling in broken glooms,
Sweetly smoothed with living ivory combs,
And the kissing of them!*

*Flashing as of steel, the blade is bright,
The blade that does not rest, the blade of night,
And the kissing of them!*

There is no need to say more, except that their joy was full. From that time misfortune ceased to perch above the posterity of Omar Al-Neman; but flew off to fix her beak in their enemies.

The king passed many months of happiness in the

arms of young Power-of-Destiny, whom he had made his wife. But one day, he called the chief people of his kingdom and the leaders of his army together in the presence of the wazir Dandan, and addressed them in these words: "The blood of my fathers still cries out for vengeance and the time has come. I have learnt that both Aphridonios and Hardobios of Cesarea are dead; but old Mother-of-Calamity still lives and governs all the lands of Roum. The new king of Cesarea is called Rumzan; and none know his father or his mother.

"Tomorrow the war shall begin again against the Unbelievers. I swear on the life of Muhamad (upon whom be prayer and peace!) that I will never return to our city of Baghdad until I have crushed the life out of that calamitous old woman and avenged our race upon her."

Next day the whole army set out for Cesarea. When they came below its walls and were preparing to reduce it to a pit of fire and blood, a young man as handsome as a king, followed by a woman with her face veiled, came towards the royal tent, where the wazir Dandan and the princess Nuzhat were sitting with their sultan.

These strangers were granted audience; as soon as they came into the tent both the woman and Nuzhat uttered loud cries and fell fainting to the ground. When they came to, they threw themselves into each others arms; for the woman was none other than Coral-Pearl, the faithful slave of Princess Abriza.

Coral-Pearl turned towards the king, saying: "My lord, I see that you carry a round white gem about your neck and that the princess Nuzhat wears the same. Behold the third is here!" So saying she pointed to the third magic jewel which hung about the

neck of the young stranger, and cried: "This young man is the son of my poor mistress, Princess Abriza; I have brought him up since birth and he is now Rumzan, king of Cesarea, son of Al-Neman. He is your brother, dear lady; he is your uncle, O king!"

The king and Nuzhat embraced Rumzan with tears of joy; and the wazir Dandan embraced the son of his old master Omar Al-Neman (whom Allah keep in his infinite mercy!). Then said Kanmakan to the king of Cesarea: "My uncle, I see you reigning over Christians in a Christian land. Tell me are you yourself an Unbeliever?" For answer, Rumzan stretched out his hand and, raising his index finger, cried: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhamad is His Prophet!"

All who were in the tent rejoiced, crying: "Glory be to Him who has chosen His own and reunited them!" Then Nuzhat asked: "How came it that you were guided into the right way, my brother, among all these people who do not know God or His Prophet?" "Coral-Pearl taught me the easy and excellent principles of our Faith," answered the king. "She embraced the Mussulman religion when my mother did so, in the palace of Omar Al-Neman at Baghdad. She has not only brought me up and been a mother to me, but she has made me a true Believer, whose destiny is in the hands of Allah."

Straightway Nuzhat made Coral-Pearl sit down on the carpet beside her and swore sisterhood with her; while Kanmakan said to Rumzan: "The Mussulman throne belongs to you by right, my uncle; from this hour I number myself among your most faithful subjects." "Nephew," answered the king of Cesarea, "what Allah has done, He has well done. It is not for me to trouble His actions." Here the wazir Dandan interrupted, saying: "O my kings, the equitable

decision between you is that each should reign on alternate days." "Your idea is an excellent one, O venerable wazir of our father," they answered in unison.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE TWO KINGS agreed to adopt Dandan's plan and, to mark their amity, Rumzan re-entered his city and threw open the gates to the Mussulman army. He proclaimed that, henceforth, Islam was the religion of the people of Cesarea, but that any Christians who liked were free to remain in their heresy. In spite of this clement clause, a thousand new Believers proclaimed the act of Faith on that happy day. Glory be to Him who sent His Prophet to be a sign of peace among all the peoples of the East and West.

The two kings gave wonderful feasts of rejoicing and remained in Cesarea for a long time, ruling day and day about in perfect contentment.

While they were there, they concerted vengeance together against Mother-of-Calamity. Rumzan, with the consent of Kanmakan, sent a messenger to Constantinople with a letter for Mother-of-Calamity, who knew nothing of what had happened and still thought that the king of Cesarea was a Christian like his maternal grandfather, Hardobios, father of Abriza. The letter was couched in these terms:

“To the glorious and venerable Shawahi Zat Al-Dawahi, the Terrible, the Victorious, the Acknowledged Scourge, the eye which watches over Christendom, scented with virtue and wisdom, smelling of the supreme and Holy Incense of the Patriarchs, the Column of Christ in the midst of Constantinople.

From Rumzan, Master of Cesarea, of the line of Hardobios the Great, whose fame has spread abroad over all the world:

O Mother of us all, the Lord has made our arms to triumph over the Mussulmans; we have destroyed their armies and taken prisoner their king, with his wazir Dandan and the Princess Nuzhat, daughter of Omar Al-Neman.

Now we await your coming, that we may rejoice over this victory together and that you may see the heads of Kanmakan and all his people roll before your sainted eyes.

You may come quite safely to Cesarea as the roads are now secure and the provinces lie in peace from Irak to Soudan, from Mosul and Damascus to the extreme boundaries of the East and West.

Do not forget to bring with you from Constantinople Saffia, mother of Nuzhat; so that she may rejoice to see her daughter again, whom we are keeping in our palace in as much honour as may be accorded to a woman.

May Christ, the son of Mary, guard you and keep you as a pure essence which lies richly hid in unalterable gold!”

He sealed this letter with his royal seal and sent it by a swift rider to Constantinople.

Between this time and the arrival of that dreadful old woman to meet her well-merited fate, there passed several days in which the two kings were able to settle

some old accounts for good or evil. This was what passed:

One day, as the two were sitting with Dandan and Nuzhat, who never veiled her face in the presence of the old wazir as she looked upon him as a father, and were talking over the chances of Mother-of-Calamity's arrival, a chamberlain entered and announced that he had without an old merchant, who had been attacked by robbers, and also the robbers themselves in chains. "He solicits an audience, O kings, for he has two letters," said the chamberlain; and the kings said: "Let him enter!"

An old man with a saintly face came in weeping; he kissed the ground before the kings, saying; "O sultans, is it possible that a Mussulman may be respected by Unbelievers, only to be attacked and robbed by the men of Islam?" "What has happened to you, most respectable old man?" asked the kings; and the merchant replied: "My masters, I have about me two letters which have always made me respected among Mussulmans and have served me as a safe conduct, freeing me from all tax upon my goods. Also one of these letters has been a consolation during the loneliness of my travels, for it is written in exquisite verses and has become more precious to me than life itself." "Let us see this letter, good merchant; or read us its contents," said the kings. So the old man gave them two squares of paper with a trembling hand, which they themselves offered to Nuzhat, saying: "You can read the most complicated writing, and intone verse very pleasantly. We pray you therefore read these letters to us."

Nuzhat opened one of the papers and cast a glance at it; then she cried out and became as yellow as saffron and fell into a swoon. They sprinkled her face

with rose-water, so that she came to herself and, springing to her feet, ran towards the merchant. With streaming eyes, she seized the old man's hand and kissed it. Those who were round could not speak for astonishment when they saw a thing happen so contrary to royal usage; while the merchant himself trembled and would have fallen had not Nuzhat held him up. She made him sit upon her own carpet, saying: "Do you not recognise me, my father? Have I become as old as all that?"

The old man thought he was dreaming, and cried: "I recognise the voice, but my eyes are old and can hardly see." Then said the queen: "My father, I am that Nuzhat Al-Zaman who wrote the letter in verse for you." It was then the old man's turn to fall down in a swoon. While Dandan was throwing rose-water in his face, Nuzhat turned towards the kings, saying: "This is the good merchant who delivered me when I was a slave to the Bedouin who stole me in the streets of Jerusalem."

The two kings rose in honour of the merchant, when he recovered from his swoon and kissed him upon the brow; the old man himself bent over the hands of Nuzhat and the wazir Dandan; and all who were concerned congratulated each other, giving thanks to Allah for this reunion. The merchant raised his arms crying: "Glory be to Him who has made the hearts of men from mindful stuff, scenting them with the sweet incense of gratitude!"

The two kings appointed him chief in general of all the khans and markets in Cesarea and Baghdad, giving him free access to the palace by day and night. When they asked him how he had come to be attacked, he answered: "As I went through the desert, some Arab cutthroats of a base sort, such as attack merchants

when they are unarmed, surrounded me with a hundred men. Their chiefs were three: a terrible negro, a horrible Kurd, and a mighty Bedouin. They bound me to a camel and were leading me behind them, when Allah sent your soldiers to capture them."

"First bring in the negro!" cried the kings. When he entered they saw that he was more ugly than the bottom of an old ape and that his eyes were more wicked than those of a tiger. Dandan was just asking him his name and the reason of his brigandage, when Coral-Pearl who had come in to speak to Nuzhat saw the negro and uttered a loud cry. She threw herself upon him like a lioness and, digging her fingers into his eyes, pulled them out in one movement, crying: "It is the negro Sullen, who killed Abriza, my poor mistress." Casting on the ground the two blood-stained eyes, which she had pressed like fruit-stones from the black man's face, she added: "Blessed be the justice of the Almighty who has permitted me to avenge my lady with these hands which held her as she died." King Rumzan gave a sign to his executioner, and by a single blow there lay two negroes in the place of one. The eunuchs carried out what was left and threw it to the dogs which haunted the ruins beyond the city.

"Bring in the Kurd!" said the kings; and the Kurd entered. He was more yellow than a lemon, more scurfy than a miller's donkey, more verminous than a buffalo which has not plunged for a year. When the wazir Dandan asked him his name and the reason of his brigandage, he answered: "I was a camel-boy in Jerusalem. One day, certain persons intrusted me with a sick youth to take to the hospital in Damascus" He had gone no further when King Kan-

makan, Nuzhat, and the wazir cried together with one voice: "It is the traitor who left King Al-Makan on the pile of fuel by the hammam door!" Kanmakan rose, saying: "Evil must be paid with evil not once but twice, or the wicked would increase in number and lawless multiply. There should be no pity for the evil-doer; for that same clemency which the Christians teach is but the virtue of eunuchs and sick men." Then, with his own sword, he made two Kurds lie where one had stood before, and commanded his slaves to bury the remains with the formal rites of religion.

"Bring in the Bedouin!" said the two kings.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NO SOONER HAD the Bedouin put his head round the opening of the tent, than Nuzhat cried: "It is the man who sold me to the merchant!" "My name is Hamad, and I do not know you," answered the prisoner. Nuzhat laughed and said: "It is the same man; for there was never a fool like to him. Look at me, Hamad, I am the girl you stole in the streets of Jerusalem and so ill-treated."

Then cried the Bedouin: "By my bonnet, it is the same woman! I think my head had better say farewell to its neck!" Nuzhat turned to the merchant, asking: "Do you not recognise him now, good father?" and the old man replied: "It is the same; a mad

fellow, if you like!" "But in spite of all his brutal qualities," said Nuzhat, "this Bedouin used to have one excellence: a love for beautiful verses and good stories." "By my bonnet, that is true!" cried Hamad, "and I know a tale now of an adventure which happened to myself, which is as strange a thing as you would wish to hear. If I tell you and you are satisfied, I shall expect you to spare my life." The tender Nuzhat smiled and said: "Tell us your tale on that condition."

Then Hamad said:

THE TALE OF HAMAD, THE BEDOUIN

I AM A GREAT robber, the crown of all robbers. The most surprising thing that happened in my life was this:

I lay alone in the desert one night near to my tethered horse; my soul panted beneath the weight of the wicked spells which the sorcerers who were my enemies had laid upon it. It was a terrible night for me; sometimes I cried like a jackal, sometimes roared like a lion, and then again complained like a camel. Trembling, I waited for the dawn. At last light appeared in the sky, and my soul grew calmer. To drive away the last smoke of my terrible dreams, I girded on my sword, seized my lance, and galloped forward on my swift horse.

As I rode I saw an ostrich standing straight ahead of me, looking at me and yet not seeming to see me. I was about to thrust at her with my lance when she turned with a great kick and, spreading her tufted wings, made off like an arrow across the desert. I pursued her at full gallop until I came to a place of terrible solitude, filled only with bare rocks and the

presence of God. I heard nothing but the hissing of vipers, the echoing calls of the Jinni in earth and air, and the howls of hunting ghouls. The ostrich disappeared as if the earth had swallowed it up. I shivered throughout all my body, and my horse reared and halted in a sweat of terror.

In my fright I wished to return the way I had come, but my horse was exhausted and the midday heat made it impossible to move. A devouring thirst tortured me and made the belly of my horse open and close like a pair of bellows. "O Hamad," I said to myself, "this is the place of your death; here your body will nourish the children of the Ghouls!"

As I was about to make my confession of faith, I saw on the edge of sight a little green line of scattered palm-trees; my horse neighed and set off of itself, so that a few minutes' riding brought me from the naked horror of the baking rocks into a sweet meadow, where a river ran at the feet of palm-trees, and a tent was pitched, beside which two splendid mares ate the moist grass.

I dismounted and watered my horse, whose nostrils were jetting fire; and then drank of the clear water until I could hold no more. I took a long cord from my saddlebags and fastened my horse in such a way that it could pasture at ease upon the green of the meadow; then I walked towards the tent, being anxious to see who was in it.

As I approached I saw a smooth-cheeked boy sitting upon a white mat, as beautiful as the crescent of the young moon; on his right reclined a slim-waisted girl, in the delicate splendour of her beauty. She seemed like the new-born branch of a willow.

I fell in love at that moment with a passion I had not yet known; and yet I could not be sure which of

them was the cause of this. Allah alone knows which is more beautiful, the full moon or the crescent moon.

I called out: "Peace be with you!"; so that the girl covered her face and the boy rose, saying: "Peace be with you likewise!" Then said I: "I am Hamad bin Al-Fezari of the chief tribe which camps by the Euphrates. I am an illustrious warrior, usually considered the equal of five hundred men. An ostrich led me hither. I beg for a mouthful of water." "Bring him meat and drink," said the youth to the girl; and thereupon the maiden rose and walked towards the tent. She walked; I still hear the harmonious chinking of her gold anklets; I still see the heavy weight of her hair which her head carried like a burden. In spite of the looks of the young man, I kept my eyes fixed on the girl as she went, and as she came back, balancing a cup of cold water on her right palm, and on her left, a tray with dates, curds, and steaks of a gazelle.

My passion was such that I could not stretch out my hand to take these things. Instead I constructed these verses on the spur of the moment and proclaimed them aloud:

*Your skin is snow,
Your henna is wet-black still,
As your fingers and palms will
Prettily show.*

*It would pass all skill
To render so
On a tiny page
A black bird in an ivory cage.*

The young man burst out laughing when he heard my poem and saw the fire of my regard. "I can see,"

he said, "that you are a peerless warrior, a cavalier without rival." "I pass for such," I answered. "Tell me to whom I am speaking." "I am Ibad bin Tamim bin Thalaba, of the tribe of Bani-Thalaba," answered the youth, "and this is my sister." Then I cried: "Make her my wife quickly, for I love her passionately and am myself a sufficiently good match." "Neither my sister nor I will ever marry," he replied. "We have chosen this calm green place within the desert to pass our life together in it, far from the cares and vexations of the world." "Nevertheless, I must have your sister as a wife," I said, "and I will have her when you are dead."

The boy leaped to the back of the tent, saying: "Look to yourself, O traitor of hospitality; and may the best man win!" He took his sword and shield from their post, while I jumped into the saddle and made ready for the onslaught. The youth came out in arms and, having mounted his horse, was about to charge when his sister ran forth weeping and embraced his knees, crying:

*"Brother, you fight for me,
Meeting a stranger;
Is it not right for me
During your danger
To wound the listening air
With a well-balanced prayer
That Allah may be ware?"*

*I hurl a lance of faith
Up to the sky,
Asking an equal death,
Swearing that I,
If you should come to scathe*

*Surely will die:
Trusting the sword of my
Infinite piety
To win you victory."*

The young man leaned from his saddle and, raising the veil which covered his sister's face, kissed her between the eyes; so that I saw her features for the first time. It was as if I watched from paradise the sun come suddenly from behind a cloud. The youth stayed his horse by his sister's side, and answered her with these lines:

*Be still and watch the wonders of my arm,
The windy pattern of my lance,
My horse's leaping,
Keeping
From chance
Of harm
My sister.*

*The circling birds of prey watch too,
A scarlet rapture in their hearts,
My lance point taking,
Breaking
His heart
In two,
My sister.*

Then, turning to me, he cried:

*You, who would win to her when I am dead,
Shall earn a certain place in knightly story;
Not of the conqueror who has the glory,
But of the needful man who dies, instead.*

With that he urged his horse against mine and sent my sword flying; before I had time to escape, he seized me with one hand, and lifted me out of the saddle like an empty sack. Throwing me into the air like a ball, he caught me again on his left hand, and held me thus at full stretch of his arm as one might sustain a captured bird upon a finger. I did not know whether to think that I was in a black dream or whether this rose-cheeked boy was some Jinni living in that tent with a houri. What followed after, did not help to resolve my difficulty.

Seeing her brother's triumph the girl ran to him, and hanging joyously upon the neck of his horse, kissed the youth upon the brow. Then she led the animal to the tent, while the young man followed, carrying me under his arm. Instead of crushing my head beneath his feet, he made me enter the tent, saying to his sister: "This man is now our guest. Let us treat him with hospitality." He made me sit down on the mat and the girl put a cushion behind my head. Afterwards she returned her brother's weapons to their place and brought him perfumed water for his face and hands. She dressed him in a white robe, saying: "May Allah so whiten the honour of your exploit and place you as a beauty-spot upon the face of the tribes." The boy answered:

*Sister, whose veins run the pure red
Blood of the Bani-Thalaba,
I fight for the dark light in your eyes.*

The girl said:

*Your bright hair makes a crown
About your head,
My brother.*

He replied:

*Tell the lions
To go behind their yellow hills;
I would think shame to leave them
Lying with the desert in their teeth.*

Then cried the girl:

*This is my brother Ibad,
The desert knows him,
It were well to take another way.*

*You have fought against my brother,
My brother Ibad,
And you saw death
Darting like a snake out of the sand.*

I was thrown into confusion by this exchange of verses and saw myself very small in my own eyes, recognising how ugly I was in comparison with these two charming people. The girl brought her brother a tray covered with meat and fruit, without casting so much as a glance at me, not even a scornful glance; as if I had been some dog, whose presence was known but not to be remarked. Yet I continued to find her lovely; and even thought her exquisite when she served her brother and neglected her own wants for him. At last the young man turned to me and invited me to share his repast, by which I knew that my life was safe. He handed me a bowl of curds and a saucer filled with a concoction of dates and aromatic water. I ate and drank with a hanging head, swearing a thousand and five hundred oaths of servitude to my charming host. He smiled and made a sign to his sister, who straightway rose and opened a great chest. She took

from it ten admirably beautiful robes of which she made nine into a packet, obliging me to accept it as a gift; and the tenth of which, the sumptuous robe which I have on now, she made me dress in on the spot.

On a second sign from her brother, she left the tent and returned to the door with a she-camel which was loaded with food and certain gifts which I have kept to this day. After so nobly rewarding my execrable conduct, they invited me to stay with them as long as I pleased; but for very shame I took leave of them at once, kissing the earth between their hands seven times. Riding on my horse and leading the camel by its halter, I journeyed across the desert by the way which I had come.

Thus it was that I became the richest man in my tribe and was able to have myself elected chief of an important band of highwaymen.

Such is the tale which I promised you; I think it fully deserves the remission of all my sins which I venture to say are neither small nor unimportant.

When Hamad finished, Nuzhat said to the two kings and the wazir: "I suppose that we ought to respect the mad; this Bedouin has his head irrevocably put on the wrong way; therefore I suggest that we pardon him because of his sensibility to poetry and his astonishing memory." Hearing his pardon, Hamad fell down among the carpets and the eunuchs came and carried him away.

Just at this point, a messenger entered the tent, still panting from the exertions of his journey, and kissed the earth between the hands of the kings, saying: "Mother-of-Calamity is only one parasang from the city gates."

The kings and the wazir were overcome with joy

at receiving this news for which they had waited so long. They asked details from the messenger, who answered: "When Mother-of-Calamity opened the letter and saw the king's signature, she cried out for joy and made immediate preparations for departure. She sent me forward to announce her coming and to say that she brings with her Queen Saffia and a hundred of the chief warriors of Constantinople."

The wazir Dandan rose and said to the kings: "It will be prudent for us to go out disguised as western Christians, and to take a thousand chosen soldiers with us dressed in the old uniform of Cesarea; so that none of her cunning shifts may save the terrible old woman." His advice was so well carried out that, when Nuzhat saw the expedition setting forth, she said: "If I had not known you, I would have taken you for real Christians!"

When Mother-of-Calamity came in sight of those who had come to meet her, Rumzan and Kanmakan told the wazir Dandan to deploy his soldiers in a large circle and make them come in slowly on all sides so that there should be no escape for the men of Constantinople. Then said Rumzan to his brother king: "Let me go forward first, as the wicked old hag knows me and will suspect nothing." With that, he set heels to his horse and in a few moments ranged up alongside Mother-of-Calamity.

He leapt from his horse and the old woman did the same. They fell into each others arms and Rumzan, looking long into her eyes, hugged her so tightly that she let a ringing fart which startled all the horses and sent pebbles jumping from the road into the faces of the warriors.

As if this had been a sign, the thousand horsemen galloped up and cried to the Christians to surrender;

in the twinkling of an eye all were taken prisoner save Queen Saffia, whom the wazir Dandan greeted nobly and gently with full explanation of what was happening. Mother-of-Calamity was heavily chained; she smelt that death was near and made great streams of water in her garments.

The Mussulmans then left Cesarea and arrived without incident at Baghdad. The kings had the whole city decorated and illuminated, and invited the people by public proclamation to assemble in front of the palace. When the whole place and all the streets which converged upon it were packed with men, women, and children, a scabby ass was led forth from the great gate and upside down upon its back was seen Mother-of-Calamity, her head covered with a red rag and crowned with dung. Before her walked a herald with a great voice, reciting the chief crimes of this old woman who had been the most fruitful source of sorrow throughout the East and West.

When all the women and children had spat in her face, she was nailed by the feet to the great gate of Baghdad. Thus perished, rendering her stinking soul through her anus to the hell which gaped for it, that disastrous stench, that fabulous farter, the cunning, the politic, the perverse Mother-of-Calamity. Treachery betrayed her as she had betrayed others; and her death was regarded as a presage that Constantinople would soon be taken by the Believers and that the arms of Islam should triumph in peace from end to end of the earth which Allah made.

The hundred Christian knights preferred to embrace the Simple Faith rather than return to their own country.

The two kings and the wazir Dandan ordered the most able scribes in the palace to place on record in

the annals, all that had happened to the race of Omar Al-Neman, that it might serve as a judicious example for future generations.

“Such, O auspicious King,” continued Shahrazade, “is the excellent tale of King Omar Al-Neman and his two wonderful sons, Sharkan and Al-Makan; of the three queens: Abriza, Power-of-Destiny, and Nuzhat; of the wazir Dandan, and the kings, Rumzan and Kanmakan!”

Then Shahrazade fell silent.

King Shahryar looked at his clever companion tenderly and for the first time, saying:

“As Allah lives, O Shahrazade, your little sister is right when she says that your words are delicious and savoury in their novelty. I begin to regret having killed so many girls; it may even happen that I will forget my oath to make you share the fate of the others.”

Little Doniazade rose from her carpet, crying: “Dear sister, that was an admirable tale. I delighted in Nuzhat and the discourse which she gave; and the sermons of the five girls pleased me exceedingly. I confess that I rejoiced at the death of Mother-of-Calamity and found all the details of your story marvellous in the extreme.”

Shahrazade smiled at her sister, and answered: “But what would you say if I told you something of the speech of beasts and birds?” “Please do so, my sister,” replied Doniazade, “for their words should be charming, especially as reported by you.” “With all my heart,” answered Shahrazade, “but only if our lord, the king, permits; and if he still suffers from his sleeplessness.” King Shahryar said in some perplexity: “But how can beasts and birds talk? What

language do they use?" "They speak verse and prose in the purest Arabic," answered Shahrazade. "As Allah lives," cried the king, "I shall decide nothing concerning your fate until you have told me some of these things of which I was entirely ignorant. So far I have only heard men and women speaking; I shall not be displeased to hear the thoughts of those creatures which most of my subjects do not understand."

As she saw that the night was far spent, Shahrazade begged the king to wait for the next day. In spite of his impatience, Shahryar consented to do so and, taking her in his arms, lay with the beautiful Shahrazade until the morning.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE DELIGHTFUL TALE OF THE BEASTS AND BIRDS

THE TALE OF THE GOOSE, THE PEACOCK AND THE PEAHEN

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and in the passage of the age and of the moment, a peacock who lived with his wife on the borders of the sea. They delighted to walk in the forest which stretched away from the strand, full of streams and the singing of birds. During the day they peacefully sought for their food;

and at night, the peacock chose them a perch in some shady tree so that no wanton neighbour might be tempted by the charms of his young wife. They lived thus in peace and happiness, blessing their benevolent creator.

One day the peacock suggested to his wife that they should make an excursion, for change of air and scene, to an island which they could see from the shore. When the peahen answered: "I hear and I obey!" they flew off together and soon came to the island.

They found the place covered with ripe fruit trees and nourished by a multitude of streams, so that they were charmed to walk about in the cool shadow and stop from time to time to eat the fruit and drink the clear water.

As they were thinking of returning to their own home they saw a goose coming towards them, beating her wings in an ecstasy of terror. Tremblingly she asked for their protection; and both the peacock and his wife received her cordially. The peahen spoke soothingly to her saying: "Be very welcome; for you will find a family in us." The goose became a little calmer at these words and the peacock, supposing that she had met with some extraordinary adventure, asked the reason of her fright. The goose answered: "I am still quite ill with what has happened and the terror with which Adamkin has inspired me. Allah keep us! Allah guard us all from Adamkin!" "Calm yourself, my good goose, calm yourself," said the peacock who had been much upset by her words; and the peahen tried to console her, saying: "How can Adamkin come to this island? He cannot jump, he cannot walk on the water!" Then said the goose: "Thank you for the encouragement and peace which you have given me." "Dear sister," urged the pea-

hen, "I pray you tell us the nature of your fear of Adamkin and what has happened." So the goose recounted the following:

O glorious peacock and sweet hospitable peahen, I have lived on this island since I was a child, without experiencing either care or pain or ugliness. The night before last, however, as I was sleeping with my head beneath my wing, an Adamkin came to me in my dreams and would have entered into conversation with me. I was about to reply to his advances, when a voice cried: "Take care, O goose, take care! Beware of Adamkin; for his manners are pleasant and his tongue full of a sweet guile. Do not forget that the poet has said:

*Beware the sweet before the fox has sprung,
The fox behind the honey of his tongue.*

For know, poor goose, that Adamkin is so skilful that he can draw to himself ferocious monsters of the deep and those who live in the bosom of the waters; wings which sweep tranquilly above his head he can make fall in disorder with a ball of dried mud; though he is feeble, he is so wicked that he can overcome the elephant and tear away his defences to make things for his own use. Flee, goose, flee!"

I jumped up in my sleep and, without looking behind me, flew forward with stretched neck and beating wings. I hurried backwards and forwards until my strength failed me; and then alighted at the foot of a mountain, where I hid behind a rock with beating heart and a lively terror in my breast because of Adamkin. I had neither eaten nor drunken and yet I did not dare to move in search of food or water. Suddenly I saw appear in the entrance of a cave

which was opposite my hiding place, a young and ruddy lion, whose virtuous and tender looks inspired me with both confidence and sympathy. He had already seen me and, now that I glanced at him, he showed signs of great joy because my timidity and expression had quite charmed him. He approached me saying: "Come hither, gentle child, and talk with me a little." I felt honoured by his invitation and moved forward as modestly as I was able. "What is your name, and to what tribe do you belong?" asked the lion; and I answered: "My name is Goose, my tribe is the Birds." Then said he: "I see you all frightened and trembling, and yet I cannot imagine why." I told him my dream and he much astonished me by saying: "Once I also had a dream like that, which I told to my father; who warned me most strictly against Adamkin and his treacheries. So far, however, I have never met the creature." Hearing the young lion speak in this fashion, my fear grew greater and I exclaimed: "There is no doubt as to what should be done! This scourge must be destroyed and the glory of killing Adamkin suits with none so well as yourself, O Prince of Beasts. Your fame will go out through sky and earth and water when you have made an end of him." I went on encouraging and flattering the young lion until he made up his mind to go out and seek our common enemy.

He left his cave, telling me to follow him; and we set forth, with myself walking behind and the lion cantering in front, cracking his tail like a whip. I had some difficulty in keeping up with him, for we went on and on until we saw a cloud of dust coming towards us and in the middle of it a naked and fugitive donkey who jumped, caracoled and even sometimes rolled in the dust with his four legs in the air. The lion was

astonished at this sight, because his parents had hardly ever let him leave the cave before; he hailed the donkey crying: "Come here you!" The other obeyed, and my friend said to him: "O beast of little sense, why are you behaving in this way? Who are you, and to what tribe do you belong?" "Master, I am your slave the Ass, of the tribe of Asses," answered the other, "and I am come here to escape from Adamkin." The Lion laughed hugely, saying: "What, is a beast with your shape and size afraid of Adamkin?" "O prince," replied the ass, shaking his head in a knowing fashion, "I see that you do not know this terrible creature. I am not afraid of him because he can kill me, but because he can do worse. Let me tell you that he uses me to ride on, when I am young and strong; he puts something on my back which he calls a pack-saddle; he squeezes my belly with something which he calls a girth; and places below my tail a ring whose name I forget, but which cruelly wounds my most sensitive parts. He thrusts a piece of iron in my mouth which makes my tongue bleed and which he calls a bit. When I am prepared in this way, he sits on top of me and pricks my neck and my behind with a sharp point to make me go faster than I can. If, when I am foundered, I show an inclination to go slowly, he curses and swears at me so terribly that I shiver, though I am only an ass. Even in front of other people he calls me "Pimp! Son of a whore! Son of a bugger! Your sister's arse! Lover of women!" "If, by evil chance, I wish to relieve my breast by passing air, his fury knows no bounds; it would ill become me to repeat in your presence what he calls me on such occasions. Alas, I can only relieve myself in my favourite way when I am far behind him or quite alone. And that is not all! When

I am old he will sell me to some water-carrier who will put a wooden saddle on me and load me with enormous water-jars on either side; so that at the end of certain months I shall die of ill-treatment and privation. Then my body will be thrown to the dogs who wander about the ruins. That, O king's son, is the fate which Adamkin reserves for me. Is there a more unfortunate creature in all the world? I pray you answer me, O virtuous and sensitive goose."

I shivered with horror and pity, crying: "Dear lion, the conduct of this ass is excusable. I have been almost killed by fright as I listened to him." The lion, seeing the ass making off, called to him: "Why are you in such a hurry, my friend? Stay with us a little; for you have interested me very much and I would willingly take you as a guide to lead me to Adamkin." "My lord," answered the ass, "to my infinite regret I must confess that I would rather put a day's journey between myself and him. I ran away from him yesterday as he was journeying in this direction, and now I am looking for some sure hiding place which will protect me from his perfidy. With your permission, I will now enjoy myself for a short time, as I am quite sure he cannot hear me." So saying, the ass brayed violently and followed this noise with a magnificent series of three hundred running farts. Then he rolled on the grass for quite a time. At last he rose and, seeing a cloud of dust on the horizon, stretched first one ear towards it and then another, looked fixedly at it, and finally cantered off.

Soon from out of the dust appeared a black horse with a silver spot like a new coin upon his forehead. He was a proud, beautiful and well-proportioned animal, having four crowns of white hair growing above his hoofs. He neighed most agreeably as he

approached and, when he saw the lion, halted in his honour and would have withdrawn. But my friend, who was delighted with the new comer's elegance, called out: "Who are you, O beautiful stranger? And why do you run throughout this great solitude with so disquieted an expression?" "O king of time," the other answered, "I am Horse, of the tribe of Horses; and I am fleeing before the approach of Adamkin."

"Do not say such things, O horse!" exclaimed the astonished lion. "Surely it is disgraceful for an animal of your shoulder-breadth and size to be afraid of Adamkin? You could destroy his wicked life with one blow of your foot. Look at me! I am not as big as you are and yet I have promised this gentle goose, whom you see trembling here, to kill and eat Adamkin, and thus free her from her fears for ever. After that it will be my duty and pleasure to return the poor child to the bosom of her family."

The horse looked at my friend with a sad smile, and said: "O king, I beg you not to entertain any such thoughts, or to over-estimate my strength and swiftness when it is matched against the cunning of Adamkin. When I am near him, he finds a way to tame me for his desire. He puts hobbles of hemp and hair upon my feet and fastens my head to a post fixed higher than myself in the wall, so that I cannot move or sit down or sleep; and that is not all. When he wishes to ride upon me, he puts a thing called a saddle upon my back and compresses my waist with two strong girths which hurt me very much; he places a piece of steel in my mouth and, pulling it about with reins, guides me in any direction he pleases. When he is on my back, he pricks me in the side with things called spurs until the blood runs down. When I am old and my back is not strong enough to bear him,

my muscles too weak to carry him swiftly forward, he sells me to a miller who makes me turn his mill night and day for certain years; who then in his turn sells me to a knacker who cuts my throat and flays me. At the last, my hide goes to the tanner and my hair to those who make sieves, tammies, and bolters. That is my fate with Adamkin!"

This recital disturbed the lion, so that he said: "It is quite certain that I must free creation from this disease which you call Adamkin. When did you see him last, good horse?" "I ran away from him at noon. He is now pursuing me in this direction," said the horse.

He had hardly finished speaking when yet another cloud of dust so frightened him that he ran away from us without waiting to say farewell. We held our ground and soon saw a camel coming towards us with great bounds, his neck stretched out and his throat bubbling with terror. Seeing so colossal an animal, the lion was quite sure that he was at last in the presence of Adamkin; so, without waiting for my advice, he leapt upon him and was about to strangle him, when I cried out: "Stop, my king! that is not Adamkin, but a brave camel; the most harmless creature of us all. I am sure that he also is running away from Adamkin." The lion stayed himself in time, and said in a concerned tone to the camel: "O prodigious animal, are you also afraid of this creature whose face you could so easily tread into the dust with your great feet?" The camel shrugged his shoulders and answered sadly, with his eyes fixed as in a nightmare: "Look at my nostrils, O king's son, they are gouged and split by a ring of hair which Adamkin has passed through them to tame me and lead me where he will. He fixes a cord to this ring and gives it to the littlest

of his children who, by this means, can go mounted upon a tiny ass and control, not only me, but a whole file of us, one behind the other. Look at my back; it is humped with the burdens which Adamkin has placed on it throughout the ages. Look at my legs; they are calloused and foundered with forced marches over sand and stone. And that is not all! When I grow old, through sleepless nights and days without repose, he takes no notice of my patience and my great age, but makes a little further profit by selling my old skin and venerable bones to the butcher, the tanner, and the webster. That is the usual way in which Adamkin treats my people."

The lion's indignation knew no bounds. He turned fiery red and ground his jaws, stamping on the ground with vexation. At last he said to the camel: "Make haste to tell me where you left Adamkin." The other answered: "He is looking for me, and may be here at any moment. I beg you to allow me to exile myself from this present company and to depart hurriedly into some other country than my own. For neither the solitude of the desert nor the difficulty of unknown places can hide me from his inquisition." Then said the lion: "Believe me, O camel, if you wait a little you will see me spring upon Adamkin, throw him to the earth, break his bones, drink his blood, and grow fat upon his flesh." The camel, who trembled in great sheets all over his skin at these bloodthirsty words, replied: "If you will give me leave, my lord, I would rather withdraw, for a poet has said:

*If in your own land and your pleasant tent
A face appear which fills you with dislike,
Do not attempt to vanquish it but strike
Your camp and change your very continent."*

The good camel kissed the earth between the lion's hands, and departed in great haste.

As soon as he was gone, a little old creature appeared from I know not where. He seemed something like a debased man with a wrinkled skin and carried on his shoulders a basket of carpenter's tools and eight large wooden planks.

I had not the strength to utter a single cry of warning to my companion, but fell paralysed to the ground; while the young lion went forward with an amused smile to examine this comic animal more closely. The carpenter fell on his face before my friend, smiling and saying humbly: "O glorious king, O sitter upon the tallest throne under the sky, I give you good evening and beseech Allah to increase you in fame and strength and virtue. I am an oppressed person who comes to beg your protection from his enemy."

He wept and groaned and sighed so sadly that the lion made his voice gentle, and said: "Who has oppressed you, and who are you, most eloquent, most cultivated and, at the same time, most ugly of animals?" "My lord," answered the other, "I am a carpenter of the tribe of carpenters and he who oppresses me is Adamkin, from whom may Allah preserve my king. He makes me work from dawn till night, without payment and without food. Now I have revolted and fled far from the city where he lives."

The young lion grew red with anger. He leapt and foamed and shot sparks from his eyes, crying: "Where is this calamitous Adamkin, that I may bray him between my teeth and avenge the multitude of his victims?" "He will be here soon," said the man. "He is coming after me because he has no one to build his houses any more." "Where are you thinking of

going to, O beast called carpenter?" asked the lion. The other replied: "I am looking for your father's wazir, our lord the leopard; he has sent a command to me to build him a strong cabin against the assaults of Adamkin, who is rumoured to be coming into these parts. That is why I am carrying my tools and these planks."

The lion felt himself inflamed with jealousy of the leopard, and said to the carpenter: "It is extremely presumptuous of my father's wazir to command things for himself before we have commanded them for ourselves. I bid you stay here and build the cabin for me. The wazir can wait." The carpenter pretended to make off, saying: "O, king's son, I fear the wrath of the leopard: but I will return as soon as I have executed his commission, and build you, not a cabin, but a palace." However, the lion would listen to no excuses; and, as a jest, lightly struck the little man on the breast with his paw so that he lost his balance and fell with a clatter of tools and planks. The lion burst out laughing at the fellow's discomfiture; but the carpenter hid his anger, and set slowly to work, with a fawning smile.

He took the lion's measure and, in a few moments, had constructed a solid box with a narrow opening, spiked with nails reaching through to the inside. He bored a few holes in the planks, and then respectfully invited the lion to enter his new house. "It seems very narrow," objected the lion; but the carpenter said: "Crouch down and then leap in, for you will find it large enough when you are inside." The lion lowered himself and slipped into the box, leaving only his tail outside. At once the carpenter twisted the tail, packing it in with the rest, and then, in the twinkling of an eye, nailed up the opening.

The lion tried to move, but the sharp points of the nails entered his flesh on all sides, so that he blushed for pain and shame, crying: "What is the meaning of this narrow house and these detestable points?"

The man uttered a cry of triumph and jiggled on his feet with laughter, saying: "Dog of the desert, those are the points of Adamkin who, although he is ugly and feeble, can triumph over all courage, strength, and beauty."

So saying, the horrible little man piled faggots round the box, and set all alight with a torch. Lying unnoticed on the ground, I saw my poor friend burnt to death and Adamkin making off with cries of exultation. As soon as he was gone, I flew as fast as I could in the opposite direction, half dead from grief and fear. Thus it was that I met you, my good compassionate friends.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE TWO BIRDS had listened to this recital with every mark of consternation. When it was over, the peahen said to the goose: "We are safe here, my sister; you may stay with us as long as you like, until Allah sends you peace of mind, which is His greatest gift next to good health." "But I am very frightened," said the goose; and the peahen replied. "It is unnecessary for you to be frightened; for fear argues an attempt to escape from Destiny; and you must

know that every debt shall be paid and the writing upon our brows fulfil itself to the last letter. It should console you to know that the Just Judge allows none of his creatures to perish until it has consumed that portion of happiness which is reserved for it."

As they were talking in this way, a breaking of branches and sound of footsteps so frightened the goose that she flew off towards the sea, crying: "Beware, beware; or your destinies will surely be accomplished!"

It was a false alarm, however, and soon through the parted branches appeared the head of a beautiful roebuck with moist eyes. "Do not be frightened, my sister," cried the peahen after the goose, "Come back quickly, for we have a new guest who belongs to the animal people, just as you belong to the bird people. He never eats bloody meat, but lives on herbs and grasses. If you allow yourself to be thrown into such perturbation, you will become ill."

The goose returned, moving her hips; and the roebuck said, with a bow: "This is the first time that I have been here. Never have I seen more tempting vegetation or sweeter greenery. Allow me to stay with you and partake of the blessings of Allah." "Be very welcome, urbane roebuck!" answered the three others; and for a long time this family stayed together, feasting and drinking the good air in company. They never neglected their morning or evening prayers, except the goose who, now that she felt herself in safety, forgot her duty towards the Giver.

Alas, she paid for this ingratitude with her life!

One morning a ship was wrecked on the island and the sailors who came to shore hastened towards the unsuspecting group, as soon as they saw it. The pea-

cock and his wife fled into the tall trees, while the roebuck bounded into the forest and disappeared; but the goose stayed still in confusion, attempting to run first in this direction and then in that, until she was captured and eaten.

To their horror the birds saw the goose's neck being cut, then they went in search of the roebuck whom they easily found. They told him of the goose's fate and all three congratulated each other on their own escape. They wept to remember their companion and the peahen said: "She was a modest, sweet, and gentle goose." "That is so," replied the roebuck, "but she forgot Allah during these last weeks and did not thank Him for His blessings." Then said the peacock: "Let us pray, O daughter of my uncle, and you, most pious roebuck." They kissed the earth between the hands of Allah, saying:

*Blessed be the Just and Good God
Who has made each bird and beast to stand before
Him,
Who watches over
And rewards the evil and good which we have done
In due season.
He has stretched out and lighted the heavens
As a pool for some of us,
He has robed the earth with her seas
For some of us,
Making all things beautiful.*

Shahrazade paused for a moment when she had told this tale. "Those animals are very intelligent and their prayer is excellent!" cried King Shahryar. "But is that all you can tell me of the beasts, O Shahrazade?" "Oh, that is nothing, my lord, to what I could tell you," replied the girl; and Shahryar asked:

“Why do you not go on, then?” “Before telling you any more about the animals, O king,” said Shahrazade, “I would like to tell you a story which confirms the moral which you have just heard, that prayer is agreeable to the Lord.” “Certainly!” said King Shahryar.

Then Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF THE SHEP- HERD AND THE GIRL

THERE WAS ONCE, in the mountains of our country, a wise and holy shepherd, who lived at peace, sufficing himself with the milk and wool of his flocks. He was so gentle that the wild beasts never attacked his sheep, and would salute him from afar, when they saw him, with cries after their own kind. One day, as he still lived in peaceful virtue caring nothing for the cities of the world, Allah determined to try the depth of his wisdom and the reality of his faith by the beauty of woman. Therefore He sent down one of his angels, bidding her spare no pains to make the good man sin.

As he lay sick in his cave glorifying the Creator, he saw a black-eyed girl, almost a child, come smiling through the entrance. The cave became on the instant perfumed with her presence and the venerable flesh of the shepherd trembled. He raised his eyebrows and frowned from his corner, saying: “What are you doing here, O unknown woman? I did not call you and I have no need of you.” The girl sat down close to the old man, and said: “Look at me. I am a virgin, not yet a woman, and I give myself to you for my own pleasure and on account of the great goodness which I have heard attributed to you.” “Begone, temptress

of hell!" cried the old man. "Leave me to wear out my soul in adoration of Him who dies not." The girl made all of her body move in a tempting rhythm, and sighed: "Why will you not take me? I bring you a submissive spirit and a body melting with desire. Is not my breast whiter than the milk of your sheep? Is not my nakedness cooler and brighter than a spring breaking from the rocks? Feel my hair, how much more soft it is than the wool of a lamb that is not yet born. My thighs are small and refreshing in the first flower of my youth. My little breasts have hardly flowered yet, but a quick finger can give them ecstasy. Come! Here are my lips ready to crush your mouth! Come! My teeth can infuse the old and dying with new life, and all my flesh is ready to weep drops of honey by your side!"

"O devil, depart from this place, or I will set about you with my knotted stick!" cried the old man, while each hair of his beard trembled with anger. The girl madly threw her arms about his neck and murmured in his ear: "I am tart fruit, hardly yet sweet. Eat and you shall be cured. The smell of jasmin is coarse to the odour of my virginity."

"The perfume of prayer is the only one which does not pass away!" exclaimed the shepherd; and he pushed her from him, crying: "Begone, begone, seductress!"

The child rose and lightly undressed herself until she stood before him naked and white, bathed in the dark sea of her hair. Her silent invitation was more dangerous in that lonely cave than all the desirous cries which she had uttered before. The old man groaned and hid his face in his mantle, that he might not see this living lily. "Depart, depart, O traitorous eyes!" called the old man. "You have been our grief

since the beginning of the world; you have destroyed men from the old times till now and have sown discord among the children of God. In gaining you, many a wise man has lost that infinite joy which comes after death." With that the shepherd wound his head more closely in his garment.

"You speak of the men of old time," answered the girl. "Know then, that the wisest of them loved me and the chastest of them sang my praise. My beauty never led them from the right way, but lighted their path for them, showing them the flowers beside the road of life. True wisdom is to forget all between my breasts; therefore be wise, for I am ready to teach you."

The old shepherd turned his face to the wall, crying: "Get you behind me, O wickedness! I abominate you and vomit from you! You have ever preserved the evil man and pulled the virtuous from his righteous seat. Your beauty is a lie; all beauty is a lie save that invisible grace which comes from prayer. Get you behind me, I say!"

The girl who had been sent from paradise answered: "O holy shepherd, continue to drink the milk of your sheep, to dress in their wool and to pray to our Master in solitude and peace!"

The vision departed and the wild beasts came from every ridge of the mountain to kiss the earth between the old man's hands and ask his blessing.

At this point Shahrazade fell silent; and King Shahryar said sadly: "O Shahrazade, the example of that shepherd gives me matter for reflection. I think it might be better for me if I retired to a cave to escape the cares of my kingdom, and passed my life in tending sheep. But first I should like to hear some more about the beasts and birds."

*But When
The Hundred-and-Forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE TALE OF THE TOR-
TOISE AND THE HERON

IT IS TOLD in one of my old books, O auspicious King, that a heron stood one day on the bank of a river watching with stretched neck and vigilant eye the course of the water. For this was the business by which he honestly and industriously earned a livelihood for himself and his children.

As he was waiting for the least movement in the water he saw the dead body of a man come down stream and fetch up against the rock on which he was standing. Seeing the traces of sabre and lance cuts all over the corpse, he thought to himself: "This is some brigand who has been justly punished!" and raising his wings thanked Allah, saying: "Blessed is He who makes a dead evil-doer profitable to the living virtuous!" He was about to tear strips from the body to carry to his children when he saw the sky obscured by a cloud of vultures and sparrow-hawks, who were descending towards him in lessening circles.

Fearing to be devoured by these wolves of the air he flew away as hard as he could, and came, after a few hours, to a tree which grew on an islet at the mouth of the river. Here, while he waited for the corpse to be borne down to him, he began to consider the uncertainty of life and the inconstancy of chance, saying to himself: "Behold, I am obliged to leave my

own country and the bank where I was born, which shelters my wife and children. It is an empty world; the more so for him who trusts in chance and does not put up provision for an evil day. If I had been wiser in this respect, the wolves of the air could not have troubled me. But let me be patient, for the wise always counsel patience in adversity."

As he was occupied with these thoughts, he saw a tortoise swimming slowly toward the tree. She raised her head, and seeing him wished him peace. "O heron," she asked, "how is it that I see you so far from your accustomed bank?" The heron answered:

*"If in your own land and your pleasant tent
A face appear which fills you with dislike,
Do not attempt to banish it but strike
Your camp and change your very continent."*

Good tortoise, I saw my bank encompassed by the wolves of the air and rather than be disturbed by their unpleasant faces, I preferred to exile myself until Allah shall have compassion on me."

"If that is so," replied the tortoise, "I am ready to serve you devotedly and to be the companion of your exile; for I know how unhappy a stranger can be when he is far from his own country and how pleasant it is for him to find warm affection among unknown peoples. So far I have only known you by sight, but from henceforth I hope to prove a cordial and helpful companion."

"Warm-hearted tortoise, O creature hard without, but surely soft within," answered the heron, "I feel that I am about to weep because of your unstudied offer; which I accept with gratitude. You are right in all that you say concerning hospitality towards

strangers. What would life be without friends, without the conversation of friends, without the laughter and singing of friends? He is a wise man who finds companions suiting with his own nature and does not frequent the society of the uncongenial as I have been compelled to do. My fellow herons are not only jealous of me, but are dull stupid fellows with nothing to talk about except their catches of fish. They occupy themselves with petty concerns, never thinking to lift up their hearts towards Allah. Their beaks are turned towards the ground and, though they have wings, they do not use them. They can only dive in the water and often, for very foolishness, they remain lifeless upon the river bed."

The tortoise, who had listened in silence, now cried: "Come down, O heron, that I may kiss you." The heron came down and the tortoise kissed him between the eyes, saying: "My brother, you were not made to suit with birds of your own race, who have neither subtle perception nor charm of manner. Stay with me here, and life will pass pleasantly for both of us, shaded by this tree and soothed by the low singing of the river." "Thank you, thank you, my sister!" exclaimed the heron, "but how about my wife and children?" "Allah is great and pitiful," returned the tortoise, "He will help us transport them here, so that we may all live together in security and peace." On this the heron exclaimed: "O tortoise, let us both thank the good God for having brought us together." They both said:

*Praise be to Him whose deep design
Has made your fortune equal mine;
His poor are rich in smiles, and see
His rich are poor in gaiety.*

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent. Then King Shahryar said: "O Shahrazade, your tales all combine to lead me into a milder way. And yet I should like to know if you are acquainted with any stories about wolves or other wilder animals." "That is the kind of tale which I know best," answered Shahrazade; and Shahryar exclaimed: "Tell me some of them at once!" Shahrazade promised for the next night.

*And When
The Hundred-and-forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE TALE OF THE WOLF AND THE FOX

THE FOX, O auspicious King, grew weary of the continued anger and cruelty of his lord the wolf, so he sat down one day on the trunk of a tree, his head filled with thoughts of those rights which had been taken away from him, and began to reflect. Suddenly he bounded joyfully in the air; for he had found a solution of his difficulties. He searched out the wolf, and, when he had found him frowning and with his every hair bristling from bad temper, he kissed the earth and stood before him with lowered eyes waiting to be spoken to. "Son of a dog, what is it?" cried the wolf. "Excuse my presumption, my lord," answered the fox, "but I have a plan to put before you and a request to make of you, if you will be so good as to grant me an audience." "Be less prolix," snapped the wolf, "say what you have to say quickly, or I will break every bone in your body." Then said the fox:

"I have noticed, my lord, for a long time that Adamkin has been making relentless war upon us; the forest is filled with traps and gins and pitfalls. Soon it will be altogether uninhabitable unless all the wolves and foxes league together against Adamkin." "Miserable fox, foundered and evil beast," cried the wolf, "do you presume to alliance and friendship with me? Take that for your insolence!" And so saying, he gave the fox a kick which stretched him half dead upon the earth. The fox rose limping and, in spite of his anger, assumed his most smiling and apologetic air. "My lord," he said, "I beg you to pardon your slave his lack of tact. He knows well that he has many faults; and even if he did not, the terrible and merited kick with which you have just gratified him, a kick which could easily have slain an elephant, would have taught him." The wolf was a little soothed by the fox's attitude, so he said: "Very well; only remember another time not to meddle with things which do not concern you." "You speak justly," replied the fox. "A wise man has said: 'Do not speak till you are spoken to, do not answer until you are questioned. Mind your own business, and do not load with your advice those who cannot understand it, or those who will return evil for good.'"

As he spoke, the fox was thinking to himself: "My time will come, and then this wolf shall pay to the uttermost farthing; pride, insolence, and foolish conceit are always punished in this world. Let us be humble until we are powerful." Then aloud he said: "My master, you are not ignorant that justice is a virtue of the great and to pardon is to follow the fair example of God. My crime is great, I know; but my repentance equals it; your charming kick hurt my body, it is true, but it has cured and rejoiced my soul.

A wise man has said: 'There is some slight bitterness in the first taste of punishment, but the second taste is more delicious than clarified honey.' "

"I accept your excuses and pardon the trouble you put me to in kicking you," said the wolf. "Now go on your knees with your head in the dust." The fox obeyed and adored the wolf, saying: "May Allah strengthen your domination so that you triumph always." Then said the wolf: "Now I wish you to go before me as a scout and report any game you see." The fox answering, "I hear and I obey!" ran ahead into the forest.

He soon came to a place planted with vines, and remarked in it a dubious stretch of ground which suggested that there might be a pitfall concealed there. The fox made a large detour to avoid this path, saying to himself: "He who does not look shall fall. I know something, by this time, of the snares of Adam-kin. If I saw the effigy of a fox among the vines, I should surely flee, knowing it to be a trick of Adam-kin; and, seeing an equivocal runaway such as this, I am on my guard; for discretion is the better part of valour." He advanced towards the suspected place very slowly and sometimes skipping backward, sniffing at every inch of the earth, he pricked his ears and went softly, so that at last he won past the equivocal path and was able to see a deep hole which had been covered with light branches, powdered with earth. "Praise be to Allah who gave me good eyes and a share of prudence!" cried the fox, beginning to dance with joy as if he was drunken with all the grapes of the vine. He sang:

*The trench is digged, the earth trembles to have
The great wild wolf, the proudest of the brave:*

*Runner of girls, devourer of young men,
Shall eat my dung as I squat on his grave.*

After that he rejoined the wolf, saying: "Good news! Blessings rain upon you and are not weary." "Speak with less art!" cried the wolf; and the fox continued: "Today the vine is beautiful and the beasts rejoice because the keeper of the vineyard is dead and buried below branches in the place of his labours." "What are you waiting for then, vile pimp!" grumbled the wolf. "Lead the way at once!" The fox led him to the middle of the vineyard, saying: "Here is the place." Instantly the wolf sprang upon the branches with a howl, and they gave under his weight. When the fox saw his foe rolling at the bottom of the pit, he recited these jubilant lines:

*Rejoice, rejoice, for the green forest is mine,
The beautiful vines and the plumpest game,
The marrow of the wild deer's chine,
The fat of geese,
The duck's elastic grease,
The hen's soft bottom piece,
And cock's heads red as flame.*

He jumped with a beating heart on the borders of the pit, rejoicing to hear the lamentations of the wolf. He himself began to weep and groan; so the prisoner lifted his head, saying: "Dear friend, what is the use of weeping for me? I know that I have been hard on you at times but now, for pity's sake, leave your tears and run to tell my wife and children of my danger." "Vilest of creatures," answered the fox, "are you foolish enough to think that I shed tears on your behalf? Know that I weep because you have lived so

long and bitterly lament because this fate did not overtake you long ago. Die, ill-omened wolf, and I will piss on your tomb, dancing with all the other foxes above your head!" The wolf said to himself: "This is not the time for threats; since he is my only hope." Then aloud he continued: "Dear lad, it was only a minute ago that you swore fidelity to me in a thousand words. Why this so sudden change? I may have been a little short with you in the past; but do not bear malice. Remember the words of the poet:

*Let your seed fall even as the rain drop goes
On every ground, and do not leave out those
Which seem to you the barrenest and least,
For God shall gather more than you suppose."*

"O fool of wolves," answered the fox, snarling, "have you already forgotten your insensate behaviour? A poet has said:

*If you offend a foe, and sleep;
Your enemy will keep
But one eye closed.
It is to be supposed
The other sees your crime—
And God has both eyes open all the time.*

You have oppressed me so long that I have a right to rejoice at your misfortune and eat your humiliation as if it were food." "O wise and subtle fox," whined the wolf, "you are only saying these bitter things in jest. But this is no time for joking; rather fetch a cord and tie it to a tree, that I may climb up into safety." "Gently, gently, my wolf," answered the fox laughing, "your spirit shall come out of the pit,

but your body shall not; there are great stones which will effect this separation. Gross animal, heavy-brained tyrant, I am inclined to compare your fate with the tale of the Falcon and the Partridge."

"I do not know what you are talking about," whimpered the wolf.

Then the fox said:

Know, inauspicious wolf, that I was one day eating from the vines, when I saw a great falcon drop from the air upon a little partridge. Somehow the smaller bird managed to escape his talons and hid himself in a small hole. The falcon stood at the narrow entrance of this place, saying: "Sweet little fool, why do you fly from me? I wish you well and have taken much trouble on your behalf. I only wished to catch up with you because I knew you were hungry and wanted to feed you with corn which I had collected for you. Little partridge, gentle little partridge, come out without fear and eat the corn. My eye, my soul, my fair partridge, you will find it both pleasing and digestible." The trustful bird came out in answer to this invitation, and in less time than it takes to tell you, lay all ripped open under the falcon's terrible claws. As she was dying, she said: "O wicked traitor, may Allah turn me to poison in your belly!" The falcon ate her in a single mouthful, but no sooner had he swallowed her than Allah heard her prayer and destroyed him as if by an internal flame. He fell lifeless to the ground.

"And you, O wolf," continued the fox, "have fallen into this pit because you so humiliated me."

"Have mercy upon me, old comrade!" cried the wolf. "Forget the past; for I am well paid for it as it is. I might easily have broken a leg, or put out both of my eyes. Try to help me; for the finest friend-

ship is that which shines brightest in adversity. Help me out of this and I will be your best friend, your wisest counsellor."

The fox laughed heartily at this, saying: "I see that you know nothing of the Words of the Wise." "What words and what wise?" groaned the astonished wolf. Then the fox said:

"Know, O ill-conditioned wolf, that the wise have taught us that people like you with ugly faces, coarse expressions, and malformed limbs have a soul to match their exteriors. I grant that what you have said about friendship is very fine, but you delude yourself in applying such excellent maxims to a traitor like yourself. Also, O stupid wolf, if you were wise enough to give me good counsel, would you not be wise enough to get yourself out of this hole? You remind me of the tale of the doctor." "Another tale," whimpered the wolf; and the fox said:

"There was once a peasant who had a large tumour on his right hand which prevented him from working. He sent for a famous doctor, who came with one of his eyes bandaged. 'What is the matter with your eye, good doctor?' asked the sick man; and the other answered: 'I have a tumour there which prevents me from seeing.' 'You have a tumour and do not cure it?' cried the patient. 'How then will you cure mine? Be off, and let me see your back.'"

"Before presuming to become my counsellor, you should find some way of leaving your present position and escaping that which will presently fall upon you. If you cannot do so, you had better stay where you are for ever."

The wolf burst into tears, and said in his despair: "Dear friend, I pray you stretch down your tail and pull me from this hole. I swear by Allah that I will

repent of my past cruelties; I will file my claws and break my great teeth that I may be no more tempted to attack my neighbours; I will indue the rough habit of an anchorite and pass my time in lonely penitence, eating the herbs of nature and drinking nothing but water." The fox was not softened by this, but said: "How can a creature change its nature? Wolf you are, and wolf you will be to the end of time; I have very little faith in such an apt repentance. Nor am I such a fool as to trust my tail to you. I wish to see you die; for a wise man has said: 'The death of a sinner purifies the earth.' "

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE WOLF BIT his paw in rage and despair, and then made his voice sweet to say to the fox: "Dear fox, your family is famous throughout all the world for its charming manners, its cleverness, its eloquence, and its benevolence. Remember your family, my boy; act up to its fine tradition." This time, the fox laughed so heartily that he fainted away. When he came to himself he said: "I see that your education has not yet begun, and I have hardly time to undertake it now. Yet you might listen with advantage to these few precepts: There is a cure for everything except death: Corruption waits for everything except the diamond: We may escape all except our destiny.

“You spoke just now to me of rewarding me with your friendship if I helped you to escape. I very much fear that you are like the serpent in the story which, through your ignorance, you doubtless do not know.” The wolf was obliged to confess that the tale was unknown to him; so the fox said:

“A snake once escaped from a juggler’s bag and, being cramped from long confinement, moved painfully along the ground. He would certainly have been either recaptured or crushed under foot, had not a charitable stranger seen him, imagined him to be ill, and lifted him up to warm him. The snake’s first care, when he felt life returning to him, was to choose out the most delicate part of his preserver’s body and fasten his fangs there, so that the man fell dead. Even before that time, a poet had written:

*If you must put a snake to school,
Teach him your tricks and dances while
He hisses at you: for his smile
Means that the poison bags are full.*

And another poet wrote:

*The gentle boy you spurned
And put disgrace in;
His strength to manhood turned,
Will smash your face in.*

That you may have a foretaste of the sweet attentions and beautiful round stones which folk will presently shower upon your head, and in this short time, before I freely water your tomb in my own way, lift up your head and look.”

So saying, the fox turned his back, crouched on his

two hindlegs over the pit, and did that on the wolf's face which wonderfully perfumed his last moments.

Then he climbed on a mound of earth and barked till the owners and keepers of the vineyard ran up to see what was the matter. The fox skipped off and hid himself in a place where he could see the great stones dropped upon his enemy and hear the howling of his dying agony.

At this point, Shahrazade paused for a moment to drink a glass of sherbert which little Doniazade handed to her, while King Shahryar exclaimed: "Ah, ah! I thought that the wolf would be killed. His death pleased me very much. But can you not now tell me some tale illustrating the evils of blind trust and thoughtlessness?" "I hear and I obey!" said Shahrazade, and continued:

THE TALE OF THE MOUSE AND THE WEASEL

THERE WAS ONCE a woman whose trade was the husking of sesame. It happened that a customer brought her a measure of the finest sesame, saying: "The doctor has instructed a sick friend of mine to eat nothing but this food; so I have brought it to you that you may husk and prepare it carefully. The woman set to work and by nightfall the sesame lay upon a tray in suggestive whiteness. A weasel who passed that way was tempted by the sight and went, at night, to the place where the tray was hidden; enjoying herself so much that only a handful or so of the good food remained in the morning.

The weasel from her hiding place was able to see

and hear the woman's astonished anger, and heard her cry: "Those terrible mice! They have overrun my house since the cat died. If I saw one of them, I would make it pay for all the depredations of its tribe."

The weasel said to herself: "I must confirm this woman's suspicions of the mouse if I wish to escape her anger; for, if I do not do so, she will break my back." Therefore she went and found the mouse, saying to her: "Dear sister, a neighbour has certain duties towards a neighbour. I know nothing more repulsive than a selfish householder who does not send to those houses which are near her own, the best food which the women of the place prepare, and sweets and pastries on a feast day." "That is true, my good friend," answered the mouse. "I am gratified that you, who have only been in this neighbourhood a few days, should be so generous and obliging. Would that all neighbours were as punctilious as you are! I imagine that you have something to tell me?" "The woman of the house has received a measure of the finest sesame," announced the weasel. "Her children have eaten so heartily of it that only a little remains: therefore I have hurried to tell you, before the little gluttons finish it all up."

The mouse moved her tail and jumped with excitement. Instead of taking time for reflection, instead of noticing the hypocritical air of the weasel, instead of pausing to find out where the woman might be, instead of asking herself what could have caused a weasel to be so generous, she jumped into the middle of the tray and greedily filled her mouth with the white grains. At the same moment, the woman broke in her head, and she perished through not taking thought.

King Shahryar said: "O Shahrazade, your tale has taught me a lesson in prudence. If I had known it before, I would not have trusted so easily to the wanton wife whom I was obliged to kill with my own hand and the black eunuchs who helped her in her treachery. Have you no story which illustrates a faithful friendship?"

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE TALE OF THE CROW AND THE CIVET

IT IS RELATED that a crow and a civet were great friends and passed their time in games and conversation. One day, they were talking about such interesting things that they took no notice of what was passing about them, until suddenly they were brought back to earth by the howling of a terrible tiger in the forest.

On this the crow, who was sitting on a tree trunk by the side of his friend, fluttered into the upper branches; but the civet did not know where to hide, as she could not make out from which direction the tiger's cries had come. "What must I do, my friend?" she asked the crow. "Have you neither advice nor help to give me?" "What would I not do for you, dear friend?" replied the crow. "I would confront the world, if that would aid you; but before I bring help to you on this occasion, I would like you to hear these words of a certain poet:

*At last and first
True friendship is a fighting thing,
A headlong thirst
To leap into the thick and swing
Hot blows
At your friend's foes."*

When he had made an end of these lines, the crow flew as fast as he could towards a passing flock of sheep who were guarded by dogs larger than lions. He came close and bit first one and then another of the dogs painfully in the head, so that the rest became disturbed and angry. Croaking in mockery, the crow hopped and fluttered just far enough ahead of all the dogs to escape their teeth; and led them, in a state of increasing fury, through the forest. When he considered that their baying had certainly frightened the tiger far away, he flew straight up into the air, leaving the dogs to make their way back grumbling to the flock. As soon as it was safe, he rejoined his friend the civet whose life he had so bravely protected; and the two lived together in peace and security.

Now, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, I will tell you without further delay:

THE TALE OF THE CROW AND THE FOX

IT IS RELATED that an old fox, whose conscience was charged with many sins and depredations, had retired with his wife to a certain valley rich in game. He ravaged the smaller animals to such an extent that the mountain-side was soon depopulated, and he was obliged first to eat his own children and then treacherously to strangle and devour his wife in order that he should not go hungry.

He was too old to change his hunting-ground and was not quick enough to catch hares or partridge on the wing. As he sat, one day, brooding over his black destiny, he saw a tired crow come to rest on the branch of a tree. Thought the fox to himself: "If

I can persuade this crow to become friends with me, it will be a piece of good luck. His strong wings will be more useful than my poor crippled legs; he will bring me food and be a companion for me in this lonely place." No sooner was this plan conceived than he put it into execution; bowing to the crow, and saying: "Sweet neighbour, one good Mussulman must always have two qualities which appeal to a neighbouring Mussulman: that he is of the Faith, and that he is a neighbour. I recognise these two merits in you and, further, all my heart has suddenly become filled with feeling of fraternal love towards you. Now tell me what you think of me?"

The crow burst out laughing and nearly fell from the tree, as he said: "I must admit that I am surprised. Whence this sudden friendship? How comes sincerity into your heart, when you have ever before kept it on the point of your tongue? How can animals and birds live together; and how can you persuade me with all your eloquence, that your race have ceased to be the killers and mine the killed? Does that astonish you? Wicked old fox, put your charming remarks back in your pocket and spare me this strange friendship, I pray."

Then said the fox: "I have no fault to find with your reasoning, O judicious crow; and yet there is nothing impossible to Him who has made the hearts of His creatures and lit a sudden flame in my soul on your behalf. To prove to you that persons of a different race can get on wonderfully well together, I will tell you a tale which I once heard of a flea and a mouse."

"If you talk of proofs," said the crow, "I am quite ready to listen to your tale of the Flea and the Mouse, which I have never heard before."

So the fox said :

Delightful friend, the wise, who have read books old and new, tell us that a flea and a mouse both lived in their own places within the house of a rich merchant.

One night the flea, being disgusted with sucking the bitter blood of the house cat, jumped on to the bed where the merchant's wife was sleeping. He entered among her garments and, slipping below her chemise, soon gained the delicate fold of her groin. He found the place soft and sweet and white; without rough redness or indiscreet hair, but far otherwise, dear crow, far otherwise. The flea set his feet strongly and sucked the woman's delicious blood until he could drink no more. He went so indiscreetly about his meal, that the young woman woke and clapped her hand to the place where she felt the bite. The flea would certainly have perished if he had not slipped nimbly through the numerous folds of her drawers—that is a garment which women wear, O crow—and, jumping to the ground, hidden himself in the first sanctuary which came his way.

The young woman gave a cry of pain which brought all her slaves to her. They rolled up their sleeves and searched through her garments for the flea: two investigated her robe, one searched her chemise, and two others spread out the drawers, fold by fold; while the woman herself stood naked in the light of the torches examining herself in front. Also her favourite slave investigated exhaustively behind; but, as you can suppose, none of them found anything.

“But I do not see any proofs in what you have told me,” objected the crow; so the fox hastened to say:

"We are just coming to them," and continued: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE HOLE IN which the flea had taken refuge belonged to a mouse, who was extremely offended to see a stranger so calmly making free with her home. "O parasitic flea, what are you doing here?" she cried. "You are neither of my blood nor of my kind." "Hospitable mouse," replied the flea, "if I have acted with indiscretion, it was to save my life from the mistress of this house, who would have killed me for the matter of a little blood which I took from her. I grant you, however, that it was of the first quality, deliciously warm and sitting most comfortably on the stomach. I beg you of your known goodness to let me stay with you until the danger is passed. Far from tormenting you and driving you from your own home, I shall so serve you that you will thank Allah for my presence." Recognising the sincerity of the flea, the mouse answered: "If what you say is true, O flea, you may share my hole and live in peace, dividing with me good and evil fortune. As for the blood from the woman's thigh, do not say any more about it. Digest it in peace; for Allah has provided for each creature food after its kind and there is no disgrace in taking what He has given. If we criticised His designs and tried to better them, we should soon die of

hunger and thirst. I once heard a santan say these words on the subject of simple diet:

*I have nothing, nothing,
And my heart is light;
A rag for clothing,
No wife for loathing,
Coarse salt for soothing
Bread or dough thing,
And then nothing—
Do you wonder my heart is light?"*

The flea was very much touched by the mouse's remarks, and answered: "O my sister, what a pleasant life we are going to live together! May Allah hasten the occasion on which I may repay your kindness!"

The flea's prayer was heard; for, on that very evening the mouse, who was out hunting, heard a continuous metallic chink and, going to investigate the noise, saw the merchant counting many dinars contained in a little bag. When he had calculated his treasure, he hid it below the pillow and went to sleep.

The mouse ran and told the flea what she had seen, adding: "This is your chance to repay me by helping me to transport these dinars to my hole." The flea nearly fainted at the enormity of this request, and at last said sadly to the mouse: "Do not you see my size? I could not carry a single dinar on my back. Nay, a thousand of us fleas could not do so. Yet I think I can help you by getting rid of the merchant. I can drive him from the house and you will be left alone to remove each coin as slowly as you like." "I had not thought of that, good flea, and yet it is an excellent plan!" cried the mouse. "My hole is large

enough to contain all the gold, and I have constructed seventy-two doors so that no one may shut me in and starve me. Let us hasten, O flea."

In a few bounds the smaller animal reached the merchant's bed and journeyed till he came to the man's backside, which he bit as never a backside has been bitten before. The sharp pain woke the merchant and he quickly slapped the part; but by that time the flea was far away and his victim had to be content with a thousand curses which echoed through the silent house. After tossing restlessly from side to side, the merchant tried to sleep again; but the flea returned to the attack, and bit the man with all his strength in that sensitive part which is called the perineum. The unfortunate man jumped howling out of bed and ran to the back of the house, where the wells were, to bathe himself in cold water. He did not dare to return to his room, but stayed on a bench in the courtyard all night.

In this way the mouse was able to carry the money piece by piece, to her home; so that, when the merchant returned on the morrow, not a single dinar remained in the bag. Thus the flea repaid the mouse a hundredfold for her hospitality.

"And now, O crow," continued the fox, "I hope you will recognise how ready I am to repay you for the friendship which I have requested."

"Your tale is hardly convincing, sir Fox," replied the crow, "after all, one is free to do a kind action or to refrain from it, if it seems likely to harm oneself. You have a great reputation for deceit and broken promises; how can you expect me to have confidence in one who betrayed and did to death his own cousin the wolf? He who would destroy one of his own race, almost of his own family, on whom he had

fawned for years, is hardly the animal one would choose as an ally, when one belongs to a different race. There is a tale which illustrates our relative positions very well." "What tale is that?" asked the fox; and the crow replied: "The tale of the Vulture." "I do not know the tale of the Vulture," admitted the fox, so the crow said:

There was once a vulture who surpassed all the tyrants of history by his cruelty; so that no bird, great or small, was safe from him; and the wolves of both earth and air so feared him, that they would leave their prey and depart hurriedly when they saw his terrible beak and rampant feathers. The time came when old age weighed upon the vulture, making his head bald and his claws blunt, and joining with his past intemperance to rot his beak and wither up his wings. Thus he became almost an object of pity to his victims who disdained to punish him with anything worse than contempt. At last he had to be content with scraps, which were carelessly thrown to him by those who had formed his food in the days of his wickedness.

"Like the vulture, you have lost your strength, O fox," continued the crow, "but you have not lost your treacherous habits. You wish to form an alliance with me who, by God's grace, still have a vigorous wing, a sharp eye, and a beak of steel. I advise you not to try to behave like the Sparrow." "What sparrow?" asked the fox; so the crow said:

It is related that a sparrow came to a field where sheep were grazing and walked behind them, gleaning unpleasant matters, until he suddenly saw a great eagle swoop from the sky and carry off a little lamb

in his claws. Filled with pride at this exploit of his cousin, the sparrow said to himself: "I can fly as well as the eagle, so I think I will carry off one of these great sheep." He chose out the biggest in the flock, one whose wool was so long and old that it fell in a mass below his belly, stiff and clotted with his nightly urine. The sparrow leapt upon the back of this beast and tried to fly off with it; but instead he was taken prisoner in the tangles of the sheep's fleece. The shepherd ran up and, disentangling him, pulled out his wing feathers and fastened him by the leg with a thread. He gave him to his little children as a plaything, saying: "Mark well this bird; for he tried to imitate one who was greater than he, and is now a slave."

"O wreck of a fox," said the crow, "you wish to compare yourself to one greater than yourself, even as the sparrow did. My last word to you, old rascal, is a request that you show me the breadth of your back as quickly as possible!" Then the fox understood that it was useless to attempt to deceive so sharp and quick an individual as the crow. He ground his teeth with rage and broke the largest of them. "I am glad that my refusal has broken one of your teeth," mocked the crow; but the fox looked respectfully at him, saying: "It was not your refusal that broke it, but my own shame at meeting one as wicked as myself."

So saying, the fox made off as fast as he could.

"Such, O auspicious King, is the tale of the crow," continued Shahrazade, "perhaps it has been a little long; but tomorrow, if Allah spares my life, I will redeem that fault by telling you the Tale of the Fair Shams Al-Nahar and Prince Ali bin Bakkar."

“O Shahrazade,” cried King Shahryar, “your tales of beasts and birds have charmed me very much, and have not seemed at all long. If you know any more, you must tell them to me in the future. At present the title of the tale which you promise me pleases me so much that I am ready to listen to you.”

Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and begged the king to wait until the next night.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID :

THE TALE OF ALI BIN BAKKAR AND THE FAIR SHAMS AL-NAHAR

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once in Baghdad, during the reign of the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, a rich young merchant, whose name was Abu Al-Hassan. Of all those who sold in the great market, he was the handsomest, most affable, and best dressed; so that the eunuchs of the palace chose him out when the king's favourites would buy fabrics or jewellery and the women themselves trusted blindly in his taste and a discretion which had been proved in the course of many delicate commissions. It was his custom to give refreshment to the eunuchs who came to his shop and to make them presents according to their rank; therefore all the women and slaves of the palace loved him, and he even came to the notice of the khalifat himself. Haroun Al-Rachid grew to admire him for his exquisite manners

and calmly beautiful face, allowing him access to the palace at any hour of the day or night, and inviting him to a feast sometimes that he might rejoice in those qualities of eloquence and fair singing in which he himself chiefly delighted and which were the noticeable gifts of young Abu Al-Hassan.

This youth's shop was famous among the young people of Baghdad, the sons of emirs, and the wives of chamberlains; and one of its chief frequenters was a handsome friend of the owner, Ali bin Bakkar, of the line of the ancient Persian kings.

One day this prince, who was of great beauty with perfectly drawn eyebrows, smiling teeth, and a voice like music's own, was talking to his friend in the shop, when there appeared in sight ten girls, as it might have been ten moons entering the market, about an eleventh mounted on a mule with golden trappings. This damsel was concealed under an izar of rose silk, fastened to her waist with a very wide gold belt studded with diamonds; her face was veiled only with transparent tissue through which her eyes beamed gloriously; while the flesh of her hands shone like milk and her fingers showed slim beneath their weight of pearls. Certain hints which the rose izar gave allowed the imagination to build wonderful dreams.

This young woman entered the shop and was greeted by Abu Al-Hassan with every mark of respect: he arranged cushions on the divan for her, and stood back a little to wait her pleasure. She chose carelessly certain fabrics on a gold background, a few jewels, and some rare bottles of rose essence, lifting her veil the while to prove that she had no fear of the young merchant. At the sight of her face Ali bin Bakkar was thrown into a violence of passion; but,

through delicacy, he was on the point of retiring when the girl, who had noticed him with the same interest, said with a sweet smile to Abu: "I would not drive any of your customers away; I pray you, request this young man to remain."

Ali bin Bakkar was delighted and, not wishing to be backward in politeness, exclaimed: "As Allah lives, my mistress, if I was about to retire, it was not only that I feared to be in the way, but also that these lines came into my head on seeing you:

*You see the fire gold sun high in a blue
Space which your eyes else could not journey to,
Fool, do you think to reach him without wings
Or hope that he will golden drop to you?"*

Charmed by a compliment so sweetly spoken, the woman rewarded Ali with a laughing glance, and asked the merchant in a whisper who his friend might be. "He is Ali bin Bakkar, a descendant of the ancient Persian kings. His spirit is as fine as his face," answered Abu. "He is delightful," said the young woman. "You must not be surprised, O Abu Al-Hassan, if I send one of my slaves back to ask both of you to visit me. I would like to prove to your friend that there is a palace in Baghdad fairer and having more beautiful women, more skilful entertainers, than may be found among the Persian kings." Abu Al-Hassan well understood her meaning; when he had bowed and thanked her, the girl replaced her veil and departed, leaving behind a fine scent of garments kept in jasmin and santal.

For a full minute Ali bin Bakkar did not know where he was; indeed he was so confused that Abu was obliged to warn him that people were noticing the

strangeness of his look. "My friend," said Ali, "why should I not look strange when my soul is seeking through my body for a way by which it may rejoin the spirit of that moon which has just departed? Oh, tell me who she is, for you seem to know her." "She is the favourite of the khalifat," answered Abu, "she is that Shams Al-Nahar, whom the Prince of Believers has set above his own wife, the lady Zobeida. She has a palace to herself in which she is absolute queen; no eunuchs guard her because the king has faith in her; and, for all her beauty, there is less scandalous winking in her regard than about any other woman in the palace."

Abu had only just given this explanation to his friend when a little slave came up to him and whispered in his ear: "My mistress Shams Al-Nahar has sent for both of you." Abu shut up his shop and, taking Ali by the arm, followed the slave; who soon introduced them into the king's own palace.

Ali thought that he had been transported into some realm of magic; for all about him was beauty, passing the compass of poetry; but the slave, without giving either of the young men time to express their satisfaction, clapped her hands for food to be brought. When a tray covered with meats and fruits, whose perfume was a balm to the nostrils and the heart, had been set before them the slave waited upon them herself, gave them a golden vase holding scented water when they had finished, poured a rose scent for their faces and beards from an ewer enriched with rubies, and perfumed their clothes with aloes burnt in a small golden brazier.

Then she opened a door and introduced them into a great hall having a dome held up by twenty-four pillars of transparent alabaster, whose bases and

chapters were sculptured with gold birds. Upon a golden background inside the dome, lines of living colour repeated the designs of the wide carpets which covered the floor. Between the columns were vases of flowers, and empty vases too beautiful in their bright flesh of jasper, agate, and crystal, to contain anything. The hall gave straight upon a garden, whose entrance path was ornamented with pebbles in the same colour and symmetry as the carpets and dome; so that all three made a harmony beneath the naked sky.

While Abu and Ali were gazing their fill upon these things, ten young women appeared before them and sat in a circle, with moving breasts, black eyes, and cheeks of roses.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

EACH OF THEM had a stringed instrument in her hand with which, at a sign from the little favourite slave, she joined in so sweet a prelude that Ali, dreaming of Shams Al-Nahar, felt his eyes filled with tears. "My heart is moved, my brother," he said to Abu. "This music speaks to me with a voice of weeping though I cannot tell why." "Do not be troubled, my lord," answered Abu, "let your soul float with the music, for it signifies that Shams Al-Nahar will soon arrive."

At this point the ten girls passed their fingers across the strings, the slaves shook their little tambourines, and all sang:

*All suddenly the blue air laughs,
The moon picks up her pale
Silk mist, and coifs
Her hair as with a veil.
The sun,
More moved than they,
His shining work half done,
Flees darkling down the day.*

Then one of the singers sang alone:

*Shams Al-Nahar
Our moon, has come to her pavilion;
And the young sun, whose ripe vermillion
Lips ache to know her,
Surely will show her
All the delights there are.*

Prince Ali, who was thus represented as the sun, saw a dozen young negresses coming towards him who carried upon their shoulders a silver throne on which a veiled woman was seated. These black slaves had naked breasts, and thighs with cinctures of gold and silk outlined in rich perfection. They set the throne down gently in the midst of the singers and retired among the trees of the garden.

A hand parted the draperies which floated about the throne, and the two eyes of Shams Al-Nahar looked forth as if they were two stars seen against the shadow of the moon. The favourite was dressed in a light mantle of blue on gold, pricked with a few

selected and unpurchasable rubies. She bowed smiling to the prince, who sighed on beholding her; in a few seconds their eyes said more to each other than their lips could have framed in several meetings.

At last Shams Al-Nahar with difficulty withdrew her eyes from her lover and ordered her women to sing. One of them tuned her lute and chanted:

*When two young lovers fair and fit
Kiss each the other's soul into eclipse,
Not they, but He who made their lips
Shall answer it.*

The lovers sighed; and a second damsel sang to a different rhythm:

*When it is dark
The light splits into flowers which men call stars
And which I call your eyes.*

*When it is dark
Your body distils a bright drink for my lips,
A sweet wine for my mouth.*

*When it is dark
Beauty in moon-spun vests comes to my bed
And whispers in my ear:*

*"When it is dark
The God who made him puts fire in his kiss
To sweeten a girl's soul."*

Ali bin Bakkar and the fair Shams Al-Nahar looked long at each other, while a third singer murmured this:

*The green water changes
To black and silver,
To dark blue,
To nothing as the moon sets:
All lovers and their days
So change, so pass.
Oh, seize
The young beauty of now,
The little hour which seems to stay.*

Prince Ali uttered a long sigh and wept, so that Shams Al-Nahar wept also and retired towards the door in her emotion; bin Bakkar ran in the same direction; they met behind the great curtain and embraced and fainted away. They would have fallen except for the women who held them up and carried them both to one divan, where they sprinkled their faces with water of flowers and held sharp scents to their nostrils.

Shams Al-Nahar looked round her as she came to herself and smiled happily to see that her friend, Ali, lay so near. Then she asked anxiously for Abu Al-Hassan, whom she could not see because he had retired discreetly and stood far off in some anxiety lest this latest happening should be noised abroad in the palace. When he heard her asking for him, he returned to her and bowed respectfully. "How can I ever thank you, O Abu?" cried the favourite. "I would never have known but for you that the world held such a lover and such joyful minutes. You will not find me ungrateful."

Abu thanked the girl, who turned towards Ali, saying: "Now I have no doubt of your friendship, my master, even though it cannot equal mine. Alas, alas, that Destiny should have tied me to this palace

and bound the feet of my love for you in chains!" "Dear Mistress," returned Ali, "your love has so penetrated my soul that it has become a part of it; it shall not be unknitted even after death. Oh, how unhappy we are!" Both wept scalding tears, until Abu Al-Hassan said to them: "As Allah lives, I do not understand your grief. What would happen if you were separated? Leave tears for then. The present was made for laughter." On this the favourite dried her tears and signed to one of her slaves; who hastened forward, followed by many servants bearing silver dishes on their heads, loaded with appetising dainties. When they had spread a cloth with these good things between Ali and his mistress, they withdrew and stood as still as statues against the wall.

Shams Al-Nahar invited Abu to sit opposite herself and Ali, within reach of the carved gold plates smiling with fruit and ripe with pastries. She fed first her lover and then his friend with morsels in her own fingers and, when they had eaten, had perfumed water brought for their hands in basins of illuminated silver. The young negresses handed them old wine in cups of coloured agate on saucers of vermilion. The lovers drank slowly, draining each other's eyes above the cups; and then the favourite dismissed all her women except the singers and musicians.

Shams Al-Nahar felt moved to sing; so she commanded one of the damsels to test her lute for her with this composition:

The mystery of my soul is scattered

For all to see,

Seeking my lover.

The proud defences of my heart are shattered,

*Falling from me,
Seeking my lover.
My traitor tears—as if it mattered—
Flow ceaselessly,
Seeking my lover.*

Shams Al-Nahar filled a cup and half drained it; then she gave it to the prince, who set his lips upon the same place which her lips had touched and drank the rest.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE LUTES TREMBLED in love beneath the fingers of the lute-players; and one of them, at a sign from her mistress that something should be sung low and more tenderly, murmured almost in a whisper:

*My lips are wet with tears
Again and yet again,
My cup is filled with tears
More often than with wine,
And yet I think
I ought to take this mingled drink
Of mine;
For it appears
To fortify my heart from pain,
Because the tears are from my soul
And if I drink, I shall be whole
Again.*

Shams Al-Nahar was drunken with this song, she took the lute and half shutting her eyes expressed her soul thus admirably:

*Young fawn with lighted eyes,
When you come near
It is as if my glances had drunken wine.*

*The light breeze of the desert
Is born scented, when you sigh
At evening, at cool evening
Under the palm-trees.*

*I am offended with the west wind
Because he kisses you
And refreshes the scarlet languor of your cheeks.*

*Jasmin of his belly under vests,
White jasmin
Milky as moonstones!*

*The crimson flowers of his lips
Are watered with the water of his mouth,
His eyes close after love.*

*My heart flutters like a moth
About his body,
Heedless of arrows.*

The two young men nearly fainted away with ecstasy and then trembled with pleasure, calling out: "Allah, Allah!" most fervently, laughing and weeping at the same moment. Prince Ali seized another lute and, handing it to Abu, begged him to play an accompaniment. Then with his head on his

hand, and his eyes half closed, he sang this song of his own country:

Listen, slim cup-bearer:

*If I were king
I would account and sell my heritage
For a thing.*

*If I were king
I would banish crimson from the white page
And scarlet poppies from their pasturage,
The grapes' red and the roses' rage,
For a thing.*

Ali bin Bakkar rendered this song admirably; just as he had finished, the little favourite slave of Shams Al-Nahar ran up trembling, and said: "My mistress, Masrur is at the door, with Afif and the other eunuchs, demanding to speak with you."

Ali and Abu were startled at these words and the slaves trembled for their lives; but Shams Al-Nahar remained mistress of herself, saying with a calm smile: "Do not be afraid." Then she continued to her confidant: "Beg Masrur and Afif to give me time to receive them according to their dignity." When the doors and curtains were closely shut, she left the two young men in the hall and herself went out with all her singers, locking the door behind her. Her silver throne was set under the trees of the garden and she took up a languorous pose upon it, ordering one of her girls to rub her limbs, and the other to move to a distance.

Masrur and Afif with twenty eunuchs, great-belted and carrying naked swords, were introduced by one of the negresses. They bowed very low to the favourite, as she said to them: "Allah grant, O Masrur,

that you bring good news." "He has granted it, O my mistress," answered Masrur, approaching the throne. "The Prince of Believers wishes you peace and says that he much desires to see you. The day began well and auspiciously for him; he would perfect its end at your side. He wishes to know your desires, and whether you will come to him or receive him here."

Lovely Shams Al-Nahar rose and kissed the earth to signify that the khalifat's request was a command. "I am my lord's submissive and happy slave," she said, "I pray you inform your master that my palace will be illuminated by his coming." Masrur and his eunuchs returned in haste; but they had scarcely disappeared when the favourite ran back to the hall and threw herself weeping into her lover's arms. At last Prince Ali found voice to say to his beloved: "Ah, let me hold you, let me feel you near me, let me adore the touch of your body against mine, for separation is at hand and my soul would carry away some sweet memory for the hours of darkness." "What will your grief be compared to mine," she said, "when I remain alone in this palace? You can go about the markets and find distraction in the little girls walking; their long eyes will make you forget me; the laughter of the sun upon their glass bangles will daze my fading image from your eyes. O Ali, how much easier it would be for me to shut myself in with my grief, than to command my quivering lips to smile and sing for the Commander of the Faithful! What music or what laughter can any but you inspire me to henceforward? I will for ever be looking at your empty place; I will die when I share the wine cup with another."

As Abu Al-Hassan was about to console the lovers

and bid them be patient, the confidant ran up to warn her mistress of the king's coming; so Shams Al-Nahar only had time to give a last embrace to her lover, as she said to the girl: "Lead them quickly to the gallery which overlooks the Tigris on one side and the garden on the other; when the night is dark enough, you can guide them to the river bank." So saying the poor girl conquered her tears and ran to meet the khalifat.

The confidant led Ali and Abu into the gallery and left them with many reassurances, locking the door behind her. At first they were in the dark, but soon they saw a great light shining through the guarded windows, and, looking out to see, found that it came from the lighted torches in the hands of a hundred young eunuchs and a hundred old eunuchs, who surrounded the king on his visit. The old eunuchs bore swords and marched before a group of twenty white slaves, who clustered about Haroun Al-Rachid. The torches and the jewels of the girls shone upon him as he advanced, and the lutes of the musicians surrounded him with music as Shams Al-Nahar came and bowed before his feet. He helped her to rise with a hand which she kissed, and said in his happiness: "For many days the cares of state have prevented my eyes from reposing themselves with your beauty; but Allah has at last rewarded them with this evening." He seated himself on the silver throne, and the favourite sat before him, while the twenty women made a circle about them and the players and singers stayed in a group round their mistress. The eunuchs, young and old, took their torches and scattered among the trees so that the khalifat might have the greater ease for his pleasures.

When all were disposed in this way, the khalifat

made a sign to the singers, and one of them chanted this ode which the king preferred to all others because of the rich beauty of its close:

*An early dew woos the half-opened flowers,
Wind of the south, dear child,
Close clings about their stalks for drunken hours;
And yet your eyes, dear child,
Cool pools which rise, dear child,
High in the mountains of my soul,
These, these
The lips have drunken whole;
And yet your mouth, dear child,
Your mouth, dear child, is envied of the bees.*

When these passionate words had died out in the evening airs, Shams Al-Nahar signed to her confidant who, understanding that this song would hint at her mistress's love for Ali bin Bakkar, sang:

*Child of the sand,
You colour like the rare
Rose laurel of Arabia.
Beware, beware,
The wiles of Samarkand,
The easy kisses, and
Youth of Arabia.*

The beautiful Shams Al-Nahar heard this song and fell fainting from her seat into the arms of her women; and Prince Ali, seeing her do so, impelled by a secret sympathy, fell in a swoon into the arms of Abu Al-Hassan.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU DID NOT know what to do; he was hunting vainly for water in the dark, when one of the doors of the gallery opened and the confidant hurried in, saying: "Follow me quickly; for all outside is in a confusion which bodes no good to any of us. Come with me, or we shall all be dead!" "O girl in need," said Abu, "draw near and see the condition of my friend!"

When the slave came near enough to see Prince Ali lying in a faint upon the carpet, she ran to a table on which were certain flasks, and chose a sprinkler charged with waters of flowers, with which she refreshed the face of the young man until he came to himself. Then she lifted Ali by his feet, while Abu took his shoulders, and helped to carry him on to the bank of the Tigris, which was behind the palace. They set him down gently on a bench and, when the young girl clapped her hands, a boat with a single rower came to them across the water. Without a word the oarsman took the prince in his arms and laid him down in his vessel. Abu followed and the confidant excusing herself from accompanying them any further, wished them peace in a sad voice and hastened back to the palace.

Ali bin Bakkar was quite recovered owing to the cool wind and the water by the time the boat reached the opposite bank. He was able to disembark leaning

on his friend's arm, but immediately sank down on a mossy stone. "Dear friend," said Abu, "pluck up your strength and try to walk; for this place is infested with bandits and you have only to reach the house of one of my friends which is quite near here. You can see the light from where we are." With that he invoked the name of Allah, and, helping Ali to rise, led him to the house. The door immediately opened to his knock, although it was late at night, and both Abu and his companion were cordially welcomed. The merchant invented a story to explain their arrival at such an hour; and the two friends passed the night in that admirable house where hospitality denied itself the joy of asking indiscreet questions. They slept ill; Abu because he seldom lay away from home and feared that his folk would be anxious about him: Ali because he had ever before his eyes a picture of Shams Al-Nahar lying pale and unconscious at the feet of the khalifat.

Next morning they took leave of their host and managed to reach the city, although Ali had great difficulty in walking. Abu's house lay first upon their way and the merchant insisted upon his friend's entering, as he did not wish to leave him alone in so dolorous a state. He prepared the best bedchamber, stretching new mattresses which were kept rolled in the large cupboards for such an occasion; and Prince Ali fell upon the bed and slept for many hours as if he had been walking for whole days about the countryside. He made his ablution and his prayer on waking, and was dressing to go out when Abu Al-Hassan prevented him, saying: "Dear master, you must spend the whole of the day and night here in order that I may bear you company and distract the gloom of your reveries." After talking with his friend all

day, Abu sent for the finest singers in Baghdad in the evening; but they only exasperated the prince with their songs and he passed a worse night than before. In the morning his state was so grave that Abu thought it better to send for a mule from the prince's stable and conduct his patient to his own house. Thinking that, in the hands of his people, Ali would lack for nothing, the merchant took his leave with a few words of encouragement, promising to return as soon as possible. He hastened to his shop; and, reopening it, sat down to wait for customers. The first person who entered was the young slave, the confidant of Shams Al-Nahar.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE WISHED HIM peace and Abu felt his heart beat faster as he remarked the sadness of her expression. He hastened to ask her news of her mistress; but she begged him first to tell her of the state of Prince Ali. When Abu had given an account of his friend's sorrow and weakness, she became sadder than she had been and sighed, saying: "Ours is an unhappy lot! The state of my mistress is even worse than that of her lover. Listen and I will tell you all that has happened since my mistress fell fainting at the feet of the khali-fat:

"After leaving you two in charge of the boatman,

I hurried back to Shams Al-Nahar and found her lying pale and unconscious, with tears flowing drop by drop through her scattered hair. The Prince of Believers sat by her side, desolated that she did not come to herself in spite of all the cares which he lavished upon her. The rest of us stayed in consternation, and answered the questions of the khalifat only by tears and genuflexions rather than run the risk of exposing our secret to him. At midnight, thanks to our application of rose water and the use of our fans, my mistress came to herself; but at once, to the stupefaction of the king, she shed a flood of tears.

“ ‘Speak to me, light of my eyes, Shams Al-Nahar,’ said the sultan to his favourite, ‘tell me the cause of your trouble, because I greatly suffer from not being able to help you.’ My mistress tried to kiss his feet, but he prevented her with his hands and sweetly asked her again and again the reason of her fainting. At last, in a broken voice, she answered: ‘Prince of Believers, it is a passing trouble caused by the disagreement within me of certain things which I have eaten today. I took two unripe lemons, six green apples, a bowl of curdled milk, a great slab of *kenafa*, and, as my hunger still remained, a measure of salt nuts and pumpkin seeds with several handfuls of sugared chickpeas hot from the oven!’ ‘Imprudent little friend,’ cried the khalifat, ‘I am sure all those things were very appetising, but you must control yourself and not gratify your stomach with all which your eyes desire. I pray you, as you love me, do not run such a risk again.’ Thereupon the king, who is as a rule most sparing of words and kisses with his women, petted my mistress and watched by her until the morning. Then, as she did not seem any better, he sent for all the doctors of the palace and the city.

These were careful, for reasons of policy, not to diagnose the real cause of her trouble, which they could see was exaggerated by the constraint which the presence of the khalifat imposed on her; and contented themselves with making so complicated a prescription that, with the best will in the world, I cannot repeat a single item of it.

“The king and the doctors withdrew at last, so that I was able to approach my mistress and kiss her hands with words of encouragement and a promise, which helped her a great deal, that I would contrive a second meeting with Ali bin Bakkar. I gave her a glass of fresh water with a dash of flower essence which brought back the colour to her cheeks, and then hurried hither at her orders to find out news of her lover.”

“My girl,” answered Abu, “as I have no further news to give you of Ali, go back to your mistress and tell her how grieved I am to hear what has happened. Say that I fully realise how hard a trial she is undergoing; but that I exhort her to patience and silence, in case anything should come to the ears of the khalifat. Come again to my shop tomorrow and, if Allah wills, I will have better news for you.”

As soon as the confidant had left, with many expressions of thanks, Abu Al-Hassan shut his shop earlier than usual and hurried to the house of Prince Ali.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE FOUND ALI surrounded by friends, relations, and doctors without number. Some of them were feeling his pulse, and others were writing out many and contrary prescriptions, which the old women criticised in loud voices as they cast sidelong glances at the doctors. So well was he being looked after, that he had hidden his head under the coverings, stopping his ears with his hands so that he might hear and see no more.

Abu pulled gently at the clothes, and said, with an encouraging expression: "Peace be with you, Ali!" The prince showed his face, saying: "Peace and the blessings of Allah be upon you, O Abu! May He grant that your news be as fair and pleasing as you face." Abu contented himself with winking, and Ali sent away all his people at this sign; then the merchant reported the news of the confidant, adding: "I am devoted to your cause, my brother; my soul belongs to you entirely. It will take no rest until I have brought back peace into your heart." Ali wept from gratitude, saying: "Put a crown upon your kindness by staying with me tonight and distracting the torture of my thoughts with your conversation." So Abu stayed by him, reciting poems and singing love songs in a whisper, close to his ear. Sometimes the verses were addressed to the poet's friend, sometimes to his mistress. Of a thousand which Abu sang, here is one:

*She has taken me with a single blow
Of her eyes and their blue swords.*

*With the arrow of musk which lies below
The camphor of her chin;
Yet I have seen carnelian change to pearl
About this girl
At a few words.
She puts her hand to her bare left breast
In all surprises.
Five branches with red petals
As the small hand settles,
A sixth as the nipple rises:
There is no silver bright
Shield which can save your sight.*

And again:

*She is a golden table
With two inverted silver cups
And he who sups
Is able
To find the scarlet fruits of the fable
Of Allah making the sunset.*

When Abu saw his friend moved to tears, he said:
“Now I will sing you that song which you so love to
whisper over to yourself in my shop. May it be a
balm to your wounded soul, O Ali! Listen:

*I can see the gold
Under the jacinth wine,
O cupbearer;
There is no time where wine is.
Your hand can make this drink of mine
Stronger and rarer
Than the untold
Age which the best of mine is.*

*Ah, who can unlock
The secret of my heart,
O cupbearer,
With white fingers as you can?
But even you can not well start
The hidden rarer
Thought, as the mock
Of old wine's crimson hue can."*

Prince Ali wept afresh at this song because of the memories which it brought back to him; and Abu watched by him all night. In the morning he hastened to open his shop, which he had neglected for some time, and stayed there all day. At evening, as he was rolling up his fabrics and preparing to shut up his shop, the young confidant of Shams Al-Nahar came to him, closely veiled, saying: "My mistress sends peace to you and to the prince and begs you to give her news of your friend's health." "Gentle child, do not ask me," said Abu. "My answer would be too sad; for our friend neither sleeps nor eats nor drinks. He lives upon verses and has become very pale." "That is sad," answered the slave. "My mistress, who is no better herself, has charged me with a love letter which I have hidden in my hair. I am commanded to return with an answer; will you not take me to him?" Abu consented to do so; he shut his shop and walked at ten paces in front of the confidant until they came to Prince Ali's house.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU REQUESTED THE girl to wait at the entrance; and, entering the Prince's chamber, made a sign to him to dismiss those who surrounded his bed. Ali turned to them, saying: "With your permission, I have a belly-ache." As soon as the bedroom was empty, Abu introduced the confidant; and Prince Ali felt himself better in health already at the sight of one who recalled his mistress to him. "The blessing of Allah upon you, O delicious comer!" he said; and straightway the girl thanked him and handed him the letter. Ali kissed it; and then, being too weak to read, handed it to Abu, who found in it verses traced by the hand of the favourite which perfectly revealed all the great pain of love. The merchant gave only a cheerful condensation of what he had read, adding: "I will write an answer which you can sign." Upon this motto, which Ali gave him, "If there was no grief in love, lovers would miss the joy of writing," he composed an answer which Ali handed weeping to the confidant who, in her turn, could not refrain from tears. Then the merchant and the slave left together, the one to return to his shop, the other to hurry to her mistress.

Abu seated himself upon a diwan, thinking within himself: "O Abu, this matter is getting serious; if the khalifat hears of it, what will happen? I love Ali bin Bakkar, and would lose one of my eyes for him; but I have a family; a mother, sisters, and little brothers. What will become of them if I continue in

my imprudence? No, no; things cannot go on as they are. Tomorrow I will beg Ali to rid himself of this fatal passion."

Faithful to his determination, Abu visited his friend on the next morning and said to him: "I have never seen, I have never heard tell of an adventure such as yours; nor have I known so strange a lover. You know that Shams Al-Nahar loves you with a passion that equals your own, and yet you become iller every day. What would happen to you if she did not return your love; if she was like the generality of women and doted upon lies and trickery? Also, have you considered what misfortunes will fall upon us if the khalifat comes to hear of this intrigue? It is not at all unlikely that this will happen, because the coming and going of the confidant is bound to pique the curiosity of the eunuchs; and then Allah alone knows how far we may all fall. Your love is a house without a door; if you persist in staying there you will sacrifice yourself and your mistress with you. I say nothing of myself, who am likely to be utterly crushed with all my family."

Ali bin Bakkar thanked his friend; but informed him that his will was no longer free and that, in any case, he would never forsake Shams Al-Nahar, who was ready to risk her life for love of him.

Seeing that his words had been in vain, Abu left his friend and walked back to his house, revolving dark fears for the future.

Now the merchant numbered amongst his most intimate friends, a certain young and discreet jeweller, named Amin; and this youth came to pay him a visit as he lay among his cushions trying to make up his mind what he should do. Amin sat down by his side, and being to a certain extent in his confidence,

asked: "O Abu, how go the loves of Ali bin Bakkar and Shams Al-Nahar?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU ANSWERED: "Allah preserve us all, O Amin! I feel that no good will come of it, and as I know you to be a friend, certain and discreet, I will tell you a plan which I have formed to extricate myself and all those who are dependent on me from this very dangerous situation." "You may speak confidentially, O Abu," said Amin; "you may look upon me as a brother entirely devoted to your service." Then Abu continued: "I have determined to satisfy all my obligations in Baghdad, to sell my merchandise at a reduced price, and to depart to some place such as Bassora, there to await the outcome of this love affair in safety. Life in this place has become impossible for me. Day and night I go in terror of being accused by the khalifat as an accessory to this intrigue."

Said Amin: "You have decided wisely, O Abu; may Allah guide you in the sole possible path, the one which you have chosen! If it will help you to leave without remorse, I am ready to take your place and faithfully serve your friend Prince Ali." "How can you do that, since you do not know the prince and are not acquainted with the ways of the palace or the sultan's favourite?" objected Abu; but Amin an-

swered: "I have often sold jewels within the palace, even to Shams Al-Nahar herself; and, for your other objection, I can easily get to know the prince and win his confidence. If that is all the difficulty you find, depart in peace; for Allah is a porter who can open all doors!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AMIN TOOK LEAVE of his friend Abu Al-Hassan for that occasion; and when he returned in three days to obtain news of him, found the house empty and shut up. When he enquired among the neighbours, they said: "Abu Al-Hassan has gone on a business journey to Bassora; he told us that he would only remain away a short time and that he would return when he had collected the sums due to him from his foreign correspondents." Amin understood that his friend had succumbed to his terrors, so he went immediately to the lodgings of Prince Ali and was introduced into his presence by the slaves. Seeing him lying very pale among his cushions, he said: "Dear master, although my eyes have not had the pleasure of looking upon you until today, I trust that you will excuse my liberty in coming to ask after your health. It is my duty to tell you something which will perplex you and to announce in the same breath a remedy for the inconvenience I report. I am the confidential friend of Abu Al-Hassan. For the last three days he did not

come to visit me as it was his custom to do every evening, so I went to his house and found that he had departed from it. Can you tell me why he has done this?"

Poor Ali bin Bakkar became even paler than before; he was just able to stammer out: "That is news to me also, and I can think of no reason for it; I will send one of my slaves at once to find out the truth." A slave was despatched, and soon returned, saying: "The neighbours tell me that Abu Al-Hassan has departed for Bassora. A young girl was making enquiry at the same time as myself. I have brought her to you as she is the bearer of some message." "Show her in at once!" cried Prince Ali.

The girl was brought in, and the sick man recognised her as the confidant of Shams Al-Nahar. She went up to the young man and whispered something in his ear, which brought alternate light and shadow to his face.

Amin, the jeweller, thought that it was time to put in a word, so he said: "Dear master, and young girl, before he went away, Abu told me all and revealed to me his terror lest the khalifat should come to know of the business in which you are concerned. Now I, who have neither family nor dependents, am very ready to take his place as your assistant, since your unhappy loves, my lord, have touched my heart profoundly. If you do not refuse my help, I swear by our holy Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) that I will be as faithful as Al-Hassan and more courageous. If you wish to do without me, rest assured that I will keep your secret."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AMIN CONTINUED: "If, on the other hand, I have managed to persuade you there is no sacrifice that I would not make, I am ready to do all to accomplish your desires, and even to make my house a meeting place for you, my lord, and the lovely Shams Al-Nahar."

Prince Ali felt strength return to him as he heard these words of the young jeweller; he rose and embraced him, saying: "Allah has sent you to me, O Amin; I put my trust in you and calmly await perfect cure at your kind hands."

Amin tore himself away from the long thanks and joyful tears of the prince; and conducted the confidant to his own house, which was destined at length to serve their loves as well as those of the prince and the favourite. Having learnt the way thither, the young girl left the jeweller, saying that she was anxious to tell her mistress all that had happened and promising to return on the morrow with the answer of Shams Al-Nahar.

Faithful to her promise, she came in the morning, saying: "O Amin, my mistress was transported with joy to hear of your good offices. She has sent me to fetch you that she may thank you in her own palace and with her own lips for your disinterested generosity."

Far from being delighted at these words, Amin trembled and became pale, saying to the girl: "My sister, I see that Shams Al-Nahar has not reflected upon this step which she requires me to take. I am a

man of the people; without the intelligence and breeding of Abu Al-Hassan. I lack the assurance which would take him safely among the eunuchs of the palace; how could I, who still shudder at the tale he told me of his meeting with your mistress, dare such a risk myself? My house would be a much better place of meeting; if Shams Al-Nahar deigns to visit me, we can talk without fear on either side." As he was so saying, the young man's limbs gave from under him even as the confidant was trying to persuade him to follow her, and she had to help him back to his seat and give him a glass of fresh water to calm his terror.

Seeing that nothing would be gained by insisting further, she said: "You are right, it would be better for all if my mistress would come here herself. I will try to persuade her and am certain that I will succeed. Wait here, O Amin."

The girl was well advised; for no sooner had Shams Al-Nahar heard the reasons of Amin than she rose up, unmindful of her weakness, and, hiding her face in a veil, followed her slave to the jeweller's house. The confidant went in first in order that her mistress might not be seen by any other person and asked Amin if he had sent away all the people of his house. "I live here alone with an old negress who looks after me," replied the young man; and the girl said: "Even she must not be allowed to enter." With that she shut all the doors herself and went to fetch her mistress.

The lovely lady entered the house, filling the halls and corridors with the perfume of her garments; without a word or look, she sat down panting upon the cushions which Amin placed for her and stayed still there for some minutes until she had recovered her breath. At last she raised her veil; and the jewel-

ler thought that the sun had been brought into his house. She turned to her confidant, whispering: "Is this the youth of whom you spoke?" and when the other answered that it was, she said: "How do you do, O Amin?" "I am well, thanks be to Allah," he answered. "May He keep you and preserve you as a perfume hidden in gold." "Are you married?" she asked; and he answered: "As Allah lives, I am both a bachelor and an orphan. I have nothing to do but serve you; and your least desires shall be upon my head and within my eyes."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AMIN CONTINUED: "I have an empty house opposite this one in which I live. I place it entirely at the disposition of you and Prince Ali bin Bakkar. I will at once furnish it worthily of you, so that you lack for nothing when you are my guest." Shams Al-Nahar thanked him cordially, saying: "I thank my destiny that I have met you; help given for friendship's sake is more useful than any other, it is a strip of green in the desert of suffering. Some day I hope that I may repay you. In the meanwhile, see how young and charming is my confidant; though it will be a great grief for me to part with her even for an hour, I make you a present of her that she may give you cool and luminous nights."

When Amin had satisfied himself that the girl was charming, with perfect eyes and thighs of satisfying excellence, Shams Al-Nahar continued: "I have unlimited confidence in this child, therefore do not scruple to inform her of all the prince says to you. I charge you to love her, since she has all those sympathetic qualities which refresh the soul." With that Shams Al-Nahar retired, thanking Amin in her gentlest speech; and the confidant followed her, looking back with smiling eyes at her new friend.

When they had gone, the jeweller ran to his shop and fetched from it all his engraved bowls and silver jars; to these he added carpets borrowed from one friend, silken cushions from another, china from a third, dishes from a fourth, and precious ewers from a fifth. With these things he magnificently furnished his empty house.

As he was giving a last glance to his preparations, the little confidant entered, swinging her hips and saying: "O Amin, my mistress wishes you peace and sends you thanks for the consolation you have given her in the absence of Abu Al-Hassan. She begs you to inform Prince Ali that the khalifat will be absent tonight and that therefore she will be able to visit him in this place. Tell him as soon as you can, for the news should have the effect of bringing him back to his wonted condition of health and laughter." Then taking a purse of gold from her bosom and holding it out to Amin, she said: "My mistress begs you to spare no expense in your preparations." Amin pushed away the purse, crying: "Do I seem so small in her eyes that she gives me gold?" The young girl took back the purse and, rejoicing in the unselfish liberality of Amin, ran back to tell her mistress that the house was ready. She helped her to bathe, combed her

hair, scented her, and dressed her in her richest robe.

Amin hurried to the house of Prince Ali after he had filled the room which was to receive the lovers with fresh plucked flowers in vases, trays heaped high with meats and pastries, conserves and drinks, and musical instruments of all sorts. He found the prince already a little medicined by hope; when he was informed that he would soon see his mistress his joy knew no bounds. He forgot his sufferings, his cheeks flowered into roses again, and his face became more beautiful than before, owing to a certain added touch of sympathy.

He dressed himself magnificently and set out with the jeweller, as strong and springing upon his feet as if he had not been down to the doors of the tomb. When they came to the house Amin invited the Prince to seat himself; and, when he had done so, not only placed cushions behind him but set two crystal vases of mingled flowers to right and left of him and gave him a rose to hold between his fingers.

The two young men talked together until a knock was heard at the door and two women entered, one of whom was entirely concealed under a thick izar of black silk.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IT WAS THE time of the call to prayer; the ecstatic voices of the muezzin brought down the invisible benediction of Allah upon the earth as Shams Al-

Nahar opened her veil and looked into the eyes of Ali bin Bakkar.

When the two lovers saw each other they fell to the floor without consciousness and it was an hour before they opened their eyes and looked at each other again, as sole means of expressing their passion. When they could speak, they exchanged such tender confidences that Amin and the confidant could not but weep in their corner.

After a certain time Amin, helped by the young girl, served his guests: first with agreeable scents which should make them hungry, then with the meats and fruits and pastries, and lastly with the abundance of wines. When they had well feasted he poured water for them and handed them napkins fringed with silks. By this time, the lovers had recovered from the depth of their emotion and were able to taste all the sweetness of their meeting. Shams Al-Nahar said to the young girl: "Give me a lute that I may try to play the divine passion out of my soul." The confidant gave her an instrument on which she played by way of prelude, a song without words. The lute sobbed or laughed under her fingers as the music came in smiles or sighs. With her eyes lost in the eyes of her lover, Shams Al-Nahar sang:

*My body turns transparent
Waiting for him,
The breeze of his coming
Plays on the sand of my heart.*

*O night beside him!
O tired lips leaching wine,
Achieving honey,
Knowing at last Spring!*

The three listeners rejoiced exceedingly at this song, crying out: "Ah, the delicious words!"

Amin was delighted to see the two lovers in each other's arms and thought that his presence was no longer necessary, therefore he withdrew discreetly, leaving them the house for their loves; and returned to his own home where he slept calmly, thinking of the pleasure of his friends.

When he woke in the morning, he saw the old negress by his bed, beating with her hands a face convulsed by fear. As he was about to ask her what had happened she pointed silently to a neighbour who stood by the door waiting for the jeweller to waken.

At a sign from Amin the man approached, saying: "I come to mourn with you in your terrible calamity." "What calamity is that?" cried Amin; and the man replied: "As soon as you had returned home last night, certain robbers, well practised in their profession, who must have seen you carrying all those precious things into your house, broke it open and took everything of value, including your two guests, whom they have probably killed."

"By Allah, this is terrible!" cried the jeweller, lifting his hands to heaven, "My valuables and those which I borrowed from my friends are lost for ever; and that is nothing to the fate of my two guests." Dressed in his shirt and with naked feet, he ran to the other house followed by his lamenting neighbour and found it empty, pillaged of everything, even as the other had said. He gave up hoping against hope, and burst into tears, crying: "What must I do now?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE NEIGHBOUR REPLIED: "Your best plan is to wait until the thieves are captured, for the Governor's guards are pursuing them even now, not only for last night's robbery but for many others." On this the poor jeweller cried: "O wise Abu Al-Hassan to have departed for the peace of Bassora! And yet . . . what is written is written."

He made his way through a commiserating crowd to the door of his own house, where he saw a stranger waiting for him, who said: "I have a secret message for your private ear." Amin would have led him into the house, but the stranger said: "Let us go to your second property which lies opposite; for it is absolutely necessary that I should speak to you alone." "I do not know you; how is it that you know me and all my houses?" asked Amin. The other smiled and answered: "I will explain that to you and also, if Allah wills, help you somewhat in your misfortune." The two crossed the road to the second house; but there the unknown, showing Amin that the door had been forced by the thieves and would no longer give them privacy for their conversation, said: "Follow me, and I will lead you to a place which is discretion itself." The two walked through street on street and market on market until at nightfall they reached the bank of the Tigris. "We will be safer on the other bank," said the unknown; and as he spoke, a boat appeared from nowhere into which he thrust Amin before the jeweller had time to refuse. With a few

vigorous strokes of the oars the stranger crossed the river and, helping Amin to disembark, led him through narrow lanes and closes until they came to a low iron door.

The man took a large rusty key from his belt and opened the door which groaned upon its hinges; Amin found himself in a low tunnel along which he was obliged to walk on hands and knees. Soon he came to a room lighted by a single torch, round which were sitting ten motionless men, dressed in the same way, whose faces were so alike that they might have been one man repeated ten times in mirrors. Amin, who was worn out by his walk, relapsed without further strength upon the floor. His guide sprinkled water upon his face and then sat down to eat with the other ten. With one voice the seated figures requested Amin to join them in their repast and he, considering that they themselves would not eat if the food were poisoned, drew near and satisfied his great hunger.

When the last of the food had disappeared, the same unison of voices asked: "Do you know us?" and when Amin denied, in Allah's name, that he did so, continued: "We are the thieves who broke into your house last night and bore away a young couple who were singing to each other. Unfortunately, their servant escaped by way of the terrace." "As you hope for the mercy of Allah, tell me, my lords, where you have hidden those guests of mine!" cried Amin. "Restore my soul with the sight of them, as you have restored my body with your generous food; and Allah will give you a great enjoyment of all those things which you stole from me." At his words eleven arms were pointed with one movement to a closed door, and eleven voices said: "Do not fear for them; they are

as safe here as if they were in the governor's house. We have sent for you to know the truth about them, for their obvious nobility so daunted us that we have not dared to question them ourselves."

Amin was relieved at this intelligence, and said: hoping to win over the thieves altogether: "My masters, if ever mercy and politeness seem to vanish from this world, men will be able to find them in your house. With folk as honourable as you, it is best to tell the whole truth; therefore listen to the extraordinary story of these two young people."

With that the jeweller told the thieves every detail concerning the loves of Shams Al-Nahar and Prince Ali bin Bakkar; but nothing would be gained by repeating them in this place. As soon as he had finished, the thieves cried: "It has indeed been an honour for our house to harbour the beautiful Shams Al-Nahar and Prince Ali bin Bakkar. Are you sure that you have spoken the truth?" "I swear that I have done so!" cried Amin; and on that the thieves rose as one man and, opening the door which they had pointed out to the jeweller, led out Prince Ali and the sultan's favourite, with a thousand excuses, saying to them: "We beg you to pardon the ill taste of our conduct; we had not thought to take persons of your rank in a jeweller's house." Then turning to Amin they continued: "We will at once return to you all the precious objects which we took from your house and only regret that we are unable to give you back the larger furniture which we have already sold by auction." (*Narrative continued in the words of Amin, the Jeweller.*)

They made up the booty into a large package and, when I had thanked them for their generosity, said to the three of us: "We do not wish to detain you

any longer unless you would care to honour us by staying. We only request that you will forget the past and promise not to inform against us." As they led us down to the river bank, we thought that we were dreaming and did not dare to exchange a word with each other. They helped us with every mark of respect into their boat and rowed so strongly that we were at the other bank before we knew ourselves to be well embarked. Hardly had we set foot to ground, than we were terrified to see ourselves surrounded by a troop of the governor's guards. The thieves, however, who had stayed in the boat, immediately rowed off and escaped.

The chief of the guards asked us, in a threatening voice, who we were and whence we came; but our fear was such that we could not answer. Therefore his distrust of us increased and he cried: "Unless you answer truthfully and at once, I shall have you bound hand and foot and taken to prison. Where do you live, in what street, in what quarter?" Hoping to save the situation, I answered: "We are strolling musicians, my lord, and this woman is a professional singer. This evening we performed at a feast in the house of those persons who have just rowed away. We cannot tell you their names as, in our trade, we do not ask questions; but are content with a good price for our services." "You do not look like singers or musicians," replied the lieutenant, with a piercing look: "you are too agitated for your story to be true. Also that woman has too many jewels to be what you say she is. You, there, take these three to prison!"

At this point Shams Al-Nahar decided to interfere; she drew the lieutenant aside and whispered in his ear something which caused him to leap backwards and bow to the earth with a babble of compliments and

excuses. He made his men fetch two boats, into one of which he conducted the favourite, placing the second at the disposition of Prince Ali and myself. While we rowed towards the city, the other vessel turned up stream bearing Shams Al-Nahar towards her palace.

When we came to the prince's house Ali fell unconscious into the arms of his slaves and the women of his house; for he had finally lost hope of ever seeing his mistress again.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHILE THE SLAVES and the women were doing all they could to bring Prince Ali round, his relations, supposing that I was the cause of his misfortunes, pressed me for details. I answered discreetly: "Good people, that which has happened to Prince Ali is so extraordinary that only he could tell you of it." Happily, while they were still insisting, my friend came to himself, and I was able to escape.

At my own house I found the old negress still lamenting and many neighbours gathered to condole with me on my loss. The woman threw herself at my feet asking many questions, but I cut her short, saying that I had need of nothing but sleep. I fell heavily among the cushions of my bed and slept like a dead man until morning. When I woke, the negress came to me with more questions; but I sent her for a filled

bowl, which I drained before I answered: "That which has happened, has happened." She retired and I fell asleep again, not waking for two nights and two days.

When I came to myself I was so refreshed that I took a bath at the hammam and then went to visit my shop; as I was producing the key of it, a little hand touched me on the shoulder and a voice said: "Greeting, O Amin!" I turned and found myself face to face with the confidant of Shams Al-Nahar.

This time I was not rejoiced to see her; but was thrown instead into a state of great fear, lest the neighbours should see me in conversation with one who was known to be concerned with the sultan's favourite. I returned the key to my pocket and made off as fast as I could, hurrying for hours up and down the city with the confidant at my heels. At last, coming upon a mosque which was very little used, I slipped off my shoes and rushed into the darkest corner of it. There I knelt in an attitude of prayer, marvelling at the good sense of my old friend, Abu Al-Hassan, and swearing before Allah that if I ever got free of this intrigue, nothing should persuade me into another such adventure.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I WAS SOON JOINED in my dark corner by the confidant, and this time I spoke with her freely, as there

were no witnesses. She asked me how I did; and I replied: "I am in good health, but would rather be dead than live in the midst of these alarms." The confidant answered:

"Then what would you say if you knew the terrible condition of my mistress? I become weak when I call to mind how she looked when she returned to her palace, where I had arrived first, escaping from terrace to terrace from your house, and jumping from the last building into the street. Who would have taken the face I then saw, pale as if it rose from the tomb for the face of the luminous Shams Al-Nahar? I threw myself at her feet, sobbing, but she bade me rise and give a thousand golden dinars to the boatman. After that she fell swooning in our arms; and did not come to herself until we had placed her upon her bed, sprinkled her face with water of flowers, wiped her eyes, washed her feet, and changed all her garments. When we found that she was breathing again I gave her rose sherbert to drink and made her smell an essence of jasmin, saying to her: 'For Allah's sake, control yourself, my mistress, for He alone knows what will happen if we go on in this way.' 'Faithful girl,' she answered, 'I have nothing left to bind me to this earth; but before I die I would have news of my beloved. I wish you to go and ask them from the jeweller, Amin, and at the same time give him this purse of gold against the loss which he has sustained because of us.'"

The confidant handed me a heavy packet, which I judged—and rightly as it turned out afterwards—to contain more than five thousand dinars. "Now," she continued, "give me news, whether it be good or bad, of the young prince."

I could not refuse a request so sweetly couched and,

in spite of all my resolutions, told her to come that evening to my house for the latest tidings of Ali. I let the girl leave the mosque first, carrying the gold, which she promised to leave at my house; and then departed myself, making towards the lodging of Ali bin Bakkar.

I found that the women and slaves had been waiting anxiously for me during the three days which had passed since my last visit, as they could find no way to calm their patient who was for ever calling upon my name. Finding Ali more dead than alive, with the flame of life hardly flickering in his eyes, I wept and pressed him against my breast, vainly trying to console him with my words.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“AMIN,” HE SAID TO ME, “I feel that the vital part of me will not be here much longer; before I die I would give you somewhat in recompense for the losses I have occasioned you.” He signed to his slaves who set before me in baskets jewels of great value, with vases and pots of gold and silver. These he begged me to accept and sent his slaves straightway to carry them to my house. When we were alone, he said: “Everything in this world has an aim or ending; woe be to him who misses the aim of love, for only the grave remains to him. If I were unmindful of the law

of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) I would ere this have sought death with my own hands, for you know not how deep my heart is drowned in pain."

To distract him I told him that I had promised to send news to Shams Al-Nahar, who had requested it; and left him after receiving a message that his only regret in dying would be the absence of his mistress.

I had hardly reached my house when the girl came as she had promised; but in so great a state of agitation that I hardly knew her. Through her tears she exclaimed: "All that we ever feared has come about! We are lost, for the khalifat knows all. . . . The suspicions of the chief eunuch were aroused by the indiscretion of one of my lady's slaves, and he examined each of the women of her palace separately. They all denied the thing, but he was clever enough to piece together the truth by comparing the discrepant details which they gave him. He reported the matter to the khalifat, who has sent a guard of twenty eunuchs to fetch Shams Al-Nahar before him. All of us at the palace are in a state of the most miserable apprehension; I have stolen a few minutes to come here and beg you to warn Prince Ali."

With that the poor girl ran off, leaving the world black about my eyes. "There is no power or might save in Allah!" I cried, and ran as hard as I could until I reached the bedside of the prince. "O Ali," I said, "you must follow me at once; for the khalifat's guards are even now seeking you with death in their hands. We must flee, even beyond the frontiers of this kingdom!"

In the name of the prince, I ordered his slaves to load three camels with provisions and the most costly treasures of the house; and myself mounted with him

upon the back of another camel. There was no time for Ali to say farewell to his mother; we set out on the instant and were soon crossing the desert outside the city.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THAT WHICH is written must be fulfilled; you may change the earth and sky but you cannot alter Destiny. We had left our sorrows in the city only to find greater ones in the desert. We had just come within sight of an oasis from which a minaret among the palm-trees looked out upon the sand, when we were surrounded by a band of brigands. Knowing that it would be fatal to resist, we allowed ourselves to be disarmed and spoiled. The vile fellows took our camels with their lading, and even stripped us of all our garments except our shirts. Then they rode off leaving us to our fate.

My poor friend was so exhausted by the frequent emotions which he had experienced, that he was like a lifeless puppet in my hands. I was able, however, to lead him very slowly to the oasis and aid him to enter the mosque in order that we might pass the night there. He fell on the earthen floor, saying: "This is the place of my death; for I know in my soul that Shams Al-Nahar is no longer among the living."

Now there was a man praying in that place, who, when he had finished, looked at us and said benevolently: "Young man, am I right in thinking that you are strangers, and are going to pass the night in this place?" "We are indeed strangers, O sheikh," I answered. "We have been dispoiled of all we had by brigands in the desert; they have not left us even wherewith to cover ourselves decently."

"Stay here, and I will return to you," said the old man compassionately. With that he departed and came back, after a few minutes, followed by a child carrying a packet. This he opened, and gave us the clothes which it contained, saying, after we had dressed ourselves: "Come to my house; for you will be better off there than fasting in this mosque." He insisted on our going with him; but when Ali came to the stranger's dwelling, he fell breathless among the carpets. As he lay there, there came with the breeze which sighed among the palm-trees the voice of some poor wandering woman singing this song:

*I wept a trifle having lost my youth;
But then I dried my tears and kept them
To weep loves' little truth
And the hard master of the girl who wept them.*

*Why should I mourn that death is nearer,
Seeing that I
In death may find the meaning clearer
Of love and misery?*

*If I had known that parting was so near
I might have thought to take
Food for the journey, glances bitter but dear,
Dear for his sake.*

When this song began, Ali bin Bakkar lifted his head and seemed to listen. When the voice died away, he fell back with a deep sigh. We came to him and found that life had departed with the song.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD MAN wept with me all night; and, through my tears, I told him the story of Ali bin Bakkar. In the morning I begged him to guard the body, while I made my way as quickly as possible to Baghdad with a caravan which was just starting. Without waiting to change my clothes, I hurried to bin Bakkar's house and sadly wished his mother peace.

When the woman saw me without her son, she trembled with presentiment. "Venerable mother of Ali," I said, "Allah commands and the rest of us obey. When a letter comes from Him calling a soul, that soul must hurry into the presence of his Master."

The prince's mother fell to the ground with a cry of suffering, moaning: "Is my son dead? Is my son dead?"

I lowered my eyes in silence, so that the poor woman fainted away; and I added my tears and lamentations to those which filled the woman's quarter of the house.

When Ali's mother was in a state to hear me, I described the death to her, adding: "May Allah reward your merit, O mother of Ali, and comfort you

with a great comfort." "Had he no message for his mother?" she asked; and I replied: "He charged you to bring his body to Baghdad." She tore her garments, and promised me that she would set out at once with a caravan to bring back the corpse of her son.

I left her people at their preparations and returned home, thinking to myself: "O Ali bin Bakkar, unhappy lover! Alas, alas, that you should have been cut down in such fair flower."

As I was opening my door a hand touched me gently upon the arm and I turned to see the confidant of Shams Al-Nahar standing before me in mourning garments. I turned to flee, but she caught me by the robe and insisted upon entering my house. When we were inside, I started to weep without very well knowing why, and said to her: "Have you heard the sad news?" "Which news, O Amin?" she asked: and I answered: "The death of Ali bin Bakkar." She wept afresh, so I knew that she had not heard of it and told her how it had come to pass, answering her sighs with mine the while.

When I had finished, she said: "And have you not heard of my grief, O Amin?" "Shams Al-Nahar has been put to death by the khalifat?" I suggested; but she shook her head, saying:

"Shams Al-Nahar is dead; but not in the way that you suppose. . . . My mistress, oh, my mistress! When she came into the presence of the khalifat, he dismissed the twenty eunuchs and made her sit by his side, saying gently: 'O Shams Al-Nahar you have enemies in the palace who have tried to blacken you in my eyes by relating things unworthy of either of us. I love you all the more, and to give the lie to their lies, I have determined to increase your allowance and

the number of your slaves. Therefore, I pray you, cast aside these heavy looks, which weigh upon my spirit, and join me in a little feast I have prepared for you, with singers and flutes and pleasant things to drink.'

"Scarcely had he spoken when the musicians and singers entered, followed by slaves bearing trays heavy with all manner of pleasant things. The khalifat sat down by the side of his favourite, the last resistance of whose heart was broken by so much goodness, and ordered music. One of the girls began this song:

*Tears falling so,
Ah, they discover
Secrets to all.
They fall and fall:
If you must know,
I have lost my lover.*

Tears falling so . . .

At this point Shams Al-Nahar gave a light sigh and fell back among her cushions; the khalifat bent over her, thinking that she had fainted; but he took her up dead.

He threw his cup away from him and turned over all the dishes; as we wept, he bade all begone from the hall save me, after breaking the lutes. He took the body of Shams Al-Nahar upon his knees and wept over her all night, without letting anyone approach him. In the morning he handed over his favourite to the mourners and washers, ordering that her funeral should exceed that of a lawful queen. Then he shut himself in his apartments and has not since been seen of any."

We wept together for the two lovers, and then I concerted a plan with the girl, by which we were able to have Ali bin Bakkar buried in a magnificent tomb beside the one which the khalifat had raised for Shams Al-Nahar.

Ever since then (concludes the jeweller) the confidant, who has become my wife, and I, have not ceased at stated intervals to visit the two tombs and weep over the disastrous love of our young friends.

Such, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, is the sad tale of Shams Al-Nahar, the favourite of Haroun Al-Rachid.

At this point, little Doniazade burst into tears and hid her face among her carpets. King Shahryar said: "O Shahrazade, your tale has made me very sad."

"I told you that story, O King," answered Shahrazade, "though it is not of the same joyful kind as my others; first, that you might enjoy the excellent poems which it contains; and second, that it might prepare you for another tale which I am ready to tell you." "I pray you tell it, if it will comfort my sad heart. What is the title of it?" cried the King; and Shahrazade answered: "It is the fairy tale of Princess Budur, Moon of Moons."

Doniazade lifted her head, crying: "Do begin at once, O Shahrazade!" but her sister said: "With all my heart and as in duty bound to our delightful king; but let it be for tomorrow night." And seeing the approach of morning she discreetly fell silent.

